



Troop and Family Support Action Guide

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND AGENCIES

There are a wide variety of programs social services provided to veterans, servicemembers, and military families by the federal and state governments. In fact, there are so many that it can often be overwhelming for those without an in-depth knowledge of what is available. This section, divided into major areas of support, is designed to provide a basic overview of some of the most prevalent, effective, and well-known programs and organizations.

1. INFORMATION RESOURCE AND REFERRAL

The following organizations websites act as centralized hubs for a wide range of support tools. If you do not have a specific line of inquiry to pursue, or if you are hoping merely to familiarize yourself with a broad range of military and veteran-focused programs, these should be your first stop.

- **Department of Labor** – www.dol.gov
 - The Department of Labor is a Cabinet level office of the federal government, the mission of which is “To foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.”
 - The Department of Labor’s website provides extensive information on the employment rights of public and private workers in general. While this information is not specific to veterans, it can be exceedingly useful to those concerned with workers’ rights, hiring discrimination, disability compensation, and other topic areas that are often quite important to those with military backgrounds.

- **Department of Veterans Affairs** – www.va.gov
 - The Department of Veterans Affairs (commonly referred to as the “VA”) is a Cabinet level office of the federal government responsible for administering services

to veterans and their families. The VA manages a number of programs in areas such as behavioral health, home ownership, education, and employment.

- The VA has three main elements: the Veterans Benefits Administration, the Veterans Health Administration, and the National Cemetery Administration.
- The VA website contains a great deal of information about available financial and social services, and should be one of the first stops for those seeking information concerning national veteran programs or benefits.

- **Joining Forces** – www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces
 - Designed to bring attention to the unique needs and strengths of military families, the Joining Forces Initiative, led by Dr. Jill Biden and First Lady Michelle Obama, provides ways for all Americans to step up and show their gratitude to the military community. Joining Forces provides service opportunities and support in a variety of areas, such as employment, education, and general wellness.

- **Military OneSource** – www.militaryonesource.mil
 - Military OneSource is a free service provided by the Department of Defense to service members and their families to help with a broad range of concerns including money management, spouse employment and education, parenting and child care, relocation, deployment, reunion, and the particular concerns of families with special-needs members. They can also include more complex issues like relationships, stress, and grief. Services are available 24 hours a day — by telephone and online.

- **Veterans Benefits Administration** - www.vba.va.gov
 - The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is one of three main elements of the Department of Veterans Affairs concerned primarily with the management of federal assistance programs, including the disbursement of financial resources such as pensions, survivors' benefits, reemployment and educational assistance, home loan guaranties, and life insurance coverage.
 - The Veterans Benefits Administration is one of three main elements of the Department of Veterans Affairs concerned primarily with the management of federal

assistance programs, including the disbursement of financial resources such as pensions, survivor's benefits, reemployment and education assistance, home loan guaranties, and life insurance coverage.

- The VBA website provides extensive information on these benefits and may be of use in answering any questions you or your community may have in related areas.

- **Veterans Crisis Line** – www.veteranscrisisline.net
 - 1-800-273-8255
 - The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and Press **1**, chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

2. EMPLOYMENT

The following tools and social services are designed to provide veterans, servicemembers, and military spouses with the resources and support necessary to find gainful, meaningful employment.

- **Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program** – <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/grants/state/jvsg>
 - The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists develop job and training opportunities for veterans, with special emphasis on veterans with service-connected disabilities. DVOP specialists provide direct services to veterans enabling them to be competitive in the labor market. They provide outreach and offer assistance to disabled and other veterans by promoting community and employer support for employment and training opportunities, including apprenticeship and on-the-job training.
 - To contact a DVOP specialist, call or visit the nearest State Employment Service (sometimes known as Job Service) agency. Alternatively, search for your State

Employment Service online; many have veteran-specific sections and information readily available, and can provide contact information for DVOP specialists and LVERs.

- **Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs)** – <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/grants/state/jvsg>
 - LVERs provide employment-related assistance to veterans in a variety of important ways:
 - Supervise the provision of all employment services veterans are able to receive, such as counseling.
 - Ensure that veterans receive priority in government and federal contractor hiring.
 - Monitor the adherence of federal employers to veteran preferences.
 - Promote and monitor veteran participation in employment and training programs.
 - Cooperate with the VA to identify and aid veterans in need of work-specific prosthetic devices, sensory aids, and other special equipment.
 - Liaise with community leaders, employers, union, and other organizations to ensure eligible veterans receive the services and benefits to which they are entitled.
 - To contact a LVER, call or visit the nearest State Employment Service (sometimes known as Job Service) agency. Alternatively, search for your State Employment Service online; many have veteran-specific sections and information readily available, and can provide contact information for LVERs.

- **Transition Assistance Program (TAP)** – <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/tap>
 - TAP is an optional 3-day program presented to exiting servicemembers and military spouses. It is designed to make the initial transition to the civilian world as seamless as possible, and includes comprehensive workshops led by professionally trained facilitators and employment personnel.

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** TAP is currently being phased out. The program is being replaced by a new, mandatory, 5-day program called **Transition Goals Plans Success, or Transition GPS**. Piloting of Transition GPS began at select installations on July 9, 2012, and it is estimated that the TAP program will be completely replaced by the end of 2013.

- **Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)** – www.dol.gov/vets
 - VETS is a Department of Labor program designed to provide veterans with the resources and expertise needed obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities, and protect their employment rights.
 - To these ends, VETS offers extensive information to both employees and employers regarding USERRA rights, veterans preference, workplace accommodations, hiring fairs, government initiatives, transition services, and much more.
 - In addition, the VETS page contains updates on recent and pending legislation, such as the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), as well as the Annual VETS Report to Congress.

- **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Vet Success Program** – www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/index.htm
 - The Vet Success program assists veterans with service-connected disabilities find, prepare for, and keep suitable jobs. For veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, Vet Success offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible. Services include:
 - Comprehensive rehabilitation evaluation to determine abilities, skills, and interests for employment.
 - Vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment services;
 - Employment services such as job-training, job-seeking skills, resume development, and other work readiness assistance.
 - Assistance finding and keeping a job, including the use of special employer incentives and job accommodations.
 - 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 medical referrals.
- Independent living services for Veterans unable to work due to the severity of their disabilities.

3. EDUCATION

Military children face a variety of unique stressors that they may not fully appreciate or understand, such as the deployment and prolonged absence of a parent. Frequent relocation is also a common issue; indeed, the average military child attends between six and nine schools prior to graduating from high school. These circumstances can lead to a variety of problems, among them behavioral and emotional issues; difficulty adjusting to new schools, settings, and friends; a lack of equivalence between classes, curriculum, and/or graduation requirements, particularly between schools in different states; and even basic issues transferring educational records from school to school.

- **Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission (MIC3)** – www.mic3.net
 - The MIC3 is an attempt by the Council of State Governments to standardize the widely varying school policies impacting transitioning military students. By taking a comprehensive approach, the MIC3 seeks to provide consistent policy guidelines in every school district and every state that voluntarily opts in. These policy guidelines generally focus on areas such as enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility, and graduation. Currently, 44 states have joined the MIC3. Those that have not yet done so are Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Minnesota, New York, and New Hampshire. For more information, visit the website above.

4. FAMILY ASSISTANCE

A wide array of programs offer support for military and veteran families. These programs function in a variety of ways, such as through professional guidance and peer support. They may emphasize family solidarity, ways to cope with deployment and reintegration, ways to accommodate the needs of military children, and much more.

- **Branch Support Organizations** – See below for website addresses.
 - Each branch of the military offers a wide array of programs designed to address common issues facing servicemembers and their families. These support centers provide a comprehensive information and referral service on a wide range of family-related programs and services, including resources available in both the military and local civilian community. They are staffed by professionals and volunteers with a variety of backgrounds. Typically, the services offered include crisis intervention, financial management, relocation assistance, spouse employment assistance, parenting education, and deployment support programs. Though each branch's military family support organizations are functionally similar, their names differ:
 - **Army — Army Community Services Center (ACS)**
 - Search for your local Army installation's ACS online for contact and program information!
 - **Navy — Fleet and Family Readiness (FFR)**
 - You can learn more about the Navy's FFR programs by visiting <https://www.cnic.navy.mil/ffr.html>.
 - **Air Force — Airman and Family Readiness Centers**
 - Locate yours by visiting www.afpc.af.mil/lifeandcareer/familyreadinesscenter.asp).
 - **Marine Corps — Family Services Center (FSC)**
 - Visit <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/military-installation/marine-corps-base-quantico/military-and-family-support-center/military-and-family-support-center> to learn more about the family support programs offered by the Marine Corps.

- **Coast Guard — Office of Work-Life Programs**
 - Visit www.uscg.mil/worklife/ for more information about specific program areas, as well as for contact information for Work-Life Center field offices.

Joining Community Forces – <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/national-guard/joining-community-forces/>

- Joining Community Forces is an outgrowth of the White House’s Joining Forces campaign. Its primary goal is to develop and strengthen family assistance and raise awareness of military and civilian support in the local community. Unlike the main Joining Forces campaign, Joining Community Forces is a grassroots, community-based effort, rather than one led by government agencies and nonprofits. Individuals and organizations collaborating through the program are known as “Community Forces.”
 - Formerly referred to as Inter-Service Family Assistance Committees (ISFACs), Community Forces focuses the efforts of local providers with a common goal: to strengthen the local military community. Because Community Forces work in communities around the country, they are uniquely positioned to find and consolidate the best local resources, and that means providing better and faster service to service members, military families, and veterans when they need it.
- **Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (FMWR)**
 - The office of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation – referred to as Family and MWR, FMWR, or simply as MWR – is responsible for providing free and discounted recreation activities, facilities, and services for military personnel and their families. Each branch of the United States Armed Forces organizes its own Family and MWR activities, though there may be overlap. Commonly provided services, facilities, and programs include fitness centers, pools, marinas, bowling centers, golf courses, restaurants, conference centers, catering, and events for single military members. Accredited family childcare and youth and school aged services are also typically offered through Family and MWR departments. To learn more about your branch of service’s Family and MWR programs, please visit the following websites:
 - **Air Force** – www.afpc.af.mil/
 - **Army** – www.armymwr.com/

- **Coast Guard** – www.uscg.mil/mwr/
- **Marines** – www.usmc-mccs.org/
- **Navy** – www.navymwr.org/
- **Space Force** – www.spaceforce.mil/
- Family and MWR programs are delivered primarily through individual installations or garrisons. To learn more about the activities in your community, navigate to the appropriate site listed above and search for your nearest installation.

5. FINANCE

Servicemembers, veterans, and military families face a number of financial issues distinct from those of the civilian population. Young and financially inexperienced servicemembers are often the primary targets of predatory lenders, for example; the combination of an assured paycheck and financial naiveté can be highly attractive to certain unsavory elements.

Members of the military and veteran community are also eligible for a number of unique financial protections and opportunities. As a result, a wide variety of organizations have begun offering information and guidance to help navigate these often highly technical waters.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) – <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/military-financial-lifecycle/>

- The CFPB is a new federal organization that seeks to protect American citizens from predatory financial practices. To better accomplish this, the CFPB has also launched a servicemember-specific website designed to address issues specific to those in the armed forces. The site provides extensive information on financial issues germane to servicemembers, such as VA benefits, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, and more.
- **Military Relief Societies**
 - Military relief societies provide emergency financial aid to servicemembers and veterans in need. This support typically comes in the form of low-interest loans,

though grants are occasionally disbursed as well. Each branch of service, except for the Marine Corps, has its own relief society.

- **Air Force Aid Society:** www.afas.org
- **Army Emergency Relief:** www.aerhq.org
- **Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society:** www.nmcrrs.org
- **Coast Guard Mutual Assistance:** www.cgmahq.org
- **Coast Guard Mutual Assistance:** www.cgmahq.org
- **Space Force:** [www.patrick.spaceforce.mil/hurricane Information /](http://www.patrick.spaceforce.mil/hurricane%20Information/)

- **Nonprofit Financial Support**

- Several nonprofit agencies provide emergency financial relief to veterans and servicemembers. Unlike relief societies, these organizations operate principally through grants, and generally do not require repayment. The availability, type, and amount of available support will vary on a case-by-case basis, however. Consult with the relevant organization prior to recommending this service to ensure that the specific type of need in question is addressed.

- **The American Red Cross:** www.redcross.org/find-help/military-families/financial-assistance
- **Operation Homefront:** <https://operationhomefront.org/>
- **USA Cares:** www.usacares.org

- **Military Saves – www.militarysaves.org**

- An official part of the Department of Defense’s Financial Readiness Campaign, Military Saves is a social marketing initiative designed to persuade, motivate, and encourage military families to save money every month. Those who take the Military Saves pledge can opt to receive a monthly e-newsletter from Military Saves, as well as a quarterly e-newsletter from America Saves, its parent organization. Military Saves also works with the defense credit unions, military banks and other non-profit organizations to promote savings and debt reduction.

- **Small Business Administration: Veterans** – <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/veteran-owned-businesses>
 - The Small Business Administration’s website provides extensive information about specific grants, loans, and other financial support tools designed to facilitate the startup and growth of new and emerging veteran-owned businesses and entrepreneurs.

6. LEGAL AID

As with finance, the legal world presents servicemembers, veterans, and military families with a number of unique issues lacking functional equivalents for civilians. Many of these issues are complex, arcane, and difficult to understand for those without a legal education. To counteract this, and to protect the military community more capably, a number of organizations and programs have been established.

- **American Bar Association (ABA) Military Pro Bono Project** - www.militaryprobono.org
 - The ABA Military Pro Bono Project accepts case referrals from military attorneys on behalf of junior-enlisted, active-duty military personnel and their families with civil legal problems, and it places these cases with pro bono attorneys where the legal assistance is needed. The Project is also the platform for Operation Stand-By, through which military attorneys may seek attorney-to-attorney advice to further assist their servicemember clients.

- **Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program** – <https://legalassistance.law.af.mil/>
 - The Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program offers free consultation and guidance to members of the military, provided by the Judge Advocate General (JAG) corps of each branch. The extent of legal advice provided is limited, however, and may be determined on a case-by-case basis. Generally speaking, complex or overly complicated issues will not be handled.
 - You can enter your geographic information into the page above to determine the location of your nearest Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program.

- **Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA)** – <http://www.military.com/benefits/military-legal-matters/scra/servicemembers-civil-relief-act-overview.html>
 - The Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act is a federal law that provides extensive protections for active duty military personnel, including activated Reservists and National Guard members. The following topics are covered by the Act:
 - Rental agreements, security deposits, prepaid rent, and eviction
 - Installment contracts
 - Credit card interest rates
 - Mortgage interest rates and mortgage foreclosure
 - Civil judicial proceedings
 - Automobile leases
 - Life and health insurance
 - Income tax payments
 - Please note that the above link is merely a general overview of the SCRA provided by www.military.com.
 - Servicemembers with questions about the SCRA are encouraged to contact their unit judge advocate or installation legal assistance officer (for more details, please see the **LEGAL AID** section of this document).

7. HOUSING

Given the frequent relocation and deployment of servicemembers, housing is an exceedingly common concern among the military community. To accommodate these concerns, the military has devised a number of programs designed to ameliorate the most common difficulties associated with relocation – concern about finding a home, affordability, making mortgage payments while overseas, and so on.

- **Automated Housing Referral Network (AHRN)** – www.ahrn.com
 - The AHRN program is sponsored by the Department of Defense and is designed to assist servicemembers and their families with the location of available housing

near their duty station. To achieve this, AHRN compiles and provides information on currently and soon-to-be available housing.

- **Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)** – www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bah.cfm
 - The BAH is an allowance given to active duty servicemembers designed to provide equitable housing compensation based on the cost of the local civilian market. The BAH allotted to each servicemember will vary based on several factors, including geographic location, pay grade, and dependency status (i.e., number of dependents, such as a spouse and/or children). The above site provides a BAH calculator that takes these factors into account and estimates a monthly payment.

- **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Servicemembers, Soldiers, and Sailors Q&A** – https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/DOC_13065.PDF
 - This page, provided and maintained by HUD, provides an easily understandable summary of the housing provisions of the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA). Broadly speaking, these provisions include mortgage interest rate limitations, debt payment relief, foreclosure protection while deployed, and eligibility for these benefits. While the linked page provides critical information, servicemembers with questions about the details of the SCRA should be encouraged to contact their unit judge advocate or installation legal officer (for more information, please see the **LEGAL AID** section of this document).

8. NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE PROGRAMS

- **Branch Reserve Commands**
 - Each branch of armed forces with a Reserve component maintains its own centralized Reserve Command website, each of which offers information and resources related to topics such as family support, career and employment training, benefits information,

retirement and transition support, and more. Though principally focused on Reservists, National Guard members may find some of the available resources useful as well. The main sites for these Branch Reserve Commands are listed here:

- **Air Force** – www.afrc.af.mil
- **Army** – www.usar.army.mil
- **Coast Guard** – <https://www.reserve.uscg.mil/>
- **Navy** – www.navyreserve.navy.mil
- **SAPACE Force**- <http://www.spaceforce.mil>

Joint Services Support (JSS) – <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/national-guard/joint-services-support-program/>

- JSS is a National Guard manpower, personnel, and services team that leverages a network of strategic partners in order to foster and enable a resilient operational reserve. To these ends, JSS offers National Guard members and their families a variety of programs in the areas of reintegration, career, family, finances, behavioral health, sexual assault prevention, and transition support.
- **TRICARE** – www.tricare.mil/reserve
 - TRICARE administers health care for servicemembers, retirees, and their families. While TRICARE operates, broadly speaking, as an HMO for those on active duty, Reservists and National Guard members face a more complex situation. To help these individuals determine their eligibility and benefits, TRICARE has helpfully provided the above website, which provides detailed information about a number of common scenarios.
- **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)** – <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/userra>
 - USERRA is a law, originally signed in 1994, “...intended to ensure that persons who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, Reserves, National Guard or other ‘uniformed services:’ (1) are not disadvantaged in their civilian careers because of their service; (2) are promptly reemployed in their civilian jobs upon their return from duty; and (3) are not discriminated against in employment based on past, present, or future military service.”

- The above website has been provided to support employers wishing to ensure their compliance, as well as for individuals to hoping learn their rights and, if necessary, file complaints.
- **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Plan** – www.yellowribbon.mil/
 - The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is a DoD-wide effort to promote the well-being of National Guard and Reserve members, their families, and communities by connecting them with resources throughout the deployment cycle. Through Yellow Ribbon events, service members and loved ones connect with local resources before, during, and after deployments. Reintegration during post-deployment is a critical time for members of the Guard and Reserve, as they often live far from military installations and members of their units. Commanders and leaders play a critical role in assuring that Reserve service members and their families attend Yellow Ribbon events where they can access information on health care, education/training opportunities, financial, and legal benefits.

9. NONGOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMS

Recent years have seen an explosion of nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations and programs designed to support servicemembers, veterans, and military families. They exist on both the national and community level, and fill many of the gaps in coverage and support in governmental programs.

Please note that the following list is by no means a complete overview of the most influential, active, or successful organizations and programs. It is meant only to provide a brief familiarity with a handful of those that may be active in your community.

- **2-1-1.org** – www.211.org/
 - 2-1-1.org provides free and confidential information and referral, segmented by zip code, in the areas of health and human services. Over the last few years, an increasing number of military- and veteran-specific resources have integrated

with 2-1-1. If you are unsure where to find a specific service or type of service, 2-1-1 may be a valuable source of information.

- **American Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces (SAF):** www.redcross.org/what-we-do/support-military-families
 - The American Red Cross' unwavering commitment to members of the U.S. military, its veterans and their families continues to grow and develop more than a century after Clara Barton first recruited nurses to support the U.S. Army. Today, the Red Cross is meeting the needs of a changing military and expanding services to veterans. Red Cross support of military members and their families enhances morale and contributes to increased operational capability in several ways.

- **Blue Star Families** – www.bluestarfam.org/
 - Blue Star Families is an organization composed of servicemembers' and veterans' spouses that works to support, connect, and empower military families. Among their best known programs is the annual Military Family Top Issues Survey, which is regularly cited by the White House and stands as one of the leading analytical tools in the military and veteran space. In addition, Blue Star Families operates 70 chapters throughout the country, each of which works to support military families in their area.

- **Community Blueprint** – www.pointsoflight.org/programs/military-initiatives/community-blueprint
 - The Community Blueprint is a national public-private partnership that provides communities with the tools needed to support their servicemembers, veterans, and military families. By creating a national network of communities, organizations, local governments, and corporations, the Community Blueprint hopes to strengthen the support network available to our nation's heroes and families.

- **Hiring Our Heroes** – www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes

- Launched in 2011, Hiring Our Heroes is a nationwide US Chamber of Commerce program designed to help veterans and military spouses find meaningful employment. Hiring Our Heroes leverages a network of over 1600 state and local chambers and other strategic partners from the public, private, and nonprofit sector to create a movement across America in hundreds of communities where veterans and military families return each day.
- **Military Child Education Coalition** – www.militarychild.org/
 - The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) serves as a model of positive leadership and advocacy for ensuring inclusive, quality educational opportunities for all military children. MCEC operates a number of programs geared towards parents, students, and teaching professionals in pursuit of this mission. MCEC also organizes volunteer programs for individuals interested in working to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of military children.
- **National Military Family Association** – www.militaryfamily.org/
 - The National and Military Family Association is a leading nonprofit organization focused on issues important to military families. They work to provide all military families with comprehensive child care, accessible health care, spouse employment options, great schools, caring communities, a secure retirement, and support for widows and widowers.
- **Operation Homefront** – <https://operationhomefront.org/>
 - Operation Homefront is a national organization that provides emergency financial and other assistance to the families of service members and wounded warriors. Operation Homefront's wide range of support services include, in addition to the above, emergency food; emergency home repairs, critical baby items, such as formula, food, and diapers; home and appliance repair; furniture and household items; local moving assistance; community events; and Wounded Warrior Transitional Family Housing.

- **VetNet** – www.vetnethq.com
 - VetNet is a recently launched project borne from a collaboration between the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Hiring Our Heroes initiative, Hire Heroes USA, Syracuse University’s Institute for Veteran and Military Families, and Google. It serves as a “one-stop shop” designed to ease the transition of servicemembers and spouses from the military to the civilian workforce. This is accomplished primarily through three distinct content areas: Basic Training, Career Connections, and Entrepreneurship. VetNet also provides networking tools, job market information, and an extensive resource library.

- **Warrior Gateway** – <https://gatewaywarriorfoundation.org/>
 - The Warrior Gateway is a nonprofit organization that seeks to connect servicemembers, veterans, and military families to government and nonprofit groups in their local community. It currently connects over 200,000 groups and is continuing to work towards a country where “information is readily available across multiple platforms and access points so that wherever someone from the military community searches for help or looks for resources, either online, through a call center or through a friend, everyone, regardless of location, has access to the same qualified information.”

10. VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteerism is an essential component of supporting servicemembers, veterans, and military families. Without an adequate supply of volunteers, organizations – including many of those above – may be unable to operate at full capacity, achieve their stated goals, or meet the rising demands of our growing military communities.

Volunteering also offers the unique opportunity to become directly involved the social services and nonprofit organizations discussed in this document. While it is important to be knowledgeable

and to act as a guide for your community, it can be equally important – and rewarding – to put your boots on the ground and support veterans, servicemembers, and military families.

The following websites are a few of the largest and most comprehensive volunteer opportunity aggregators. They can be used to find specific types of opportunities, opportunities with specific organizations, opportunities in a specific geographic area, and more. If you are looking to become more deeply involved in the support of servicemembers, veterans, and military families – or if you are simply looking to volunteer in any other area – be sure to spend some time with one or more of the services below.

Please note that the following sites are disposed towards nonprofit organizations; they are also, with the exceptions of Joining Forces and Sign Up and Serve, not limited to the military community space. If you prefer to become involved in a Family Action Group or other peer support network, you should identify and directly contact one in your local area.

- **Idealist** – www.idealists.org/
 - Idealist is an independent website that connects people, organizations, and resources. The site provides job listings, service and volunteer opportunities, and more. Idealist offers a broad range of service
- **Joining Forces** – <https://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces/>
 - Joining Forces, discussed in more detail in the previous section, also plays a pivotal role in the effort to support servicemembers, veterans, and military families by providing a space for volunteer opportunities and listings.
- **Serve.gov** – www.serve.gov/
 - Serve.gov is an online resource for finding and creating volunteer opportunities in your community. It is a component of United We Serve, a nationwide service initiative that helps meet growing social needs resulting from the economic downturn.
- **Sign Up and Serve** – <https://engage.pointsoflight.org/>
 - Points of Light recently launched Sign Up and Serve, a new and innovative way to find volunteer listings, create service opportunity listings and manage volunteer

networks. Sign Up and Serve is intuitive to use and provides a single spot for an organization's service opportunity management needs.

APPENDIX A: MILITARY 101

1. BRIEF HISTORY

The history of the United States military begins in 1775, with the establishment of the Continental Army and Navy by the Continental Congress. These forces, composed of North American colonists, fought against Great Britain during the Revolutionary War. Under the command of George Washington, the colonial forces were able to win independence from the British Empire, thereby paving the way for the creation of the United States.

It was not until after the war that what would become the United States military began to resemble a structurally modern force, however. George Washington's decision to step down as commander of the Continental Army and cede military control to a civilian Congress (and the soon-to-be-formed Executive branch) marked an unprecedented step in the evolution of the United States. Though we now take civilian control of the military for granted – indeed, the phrase “commander-in-chief” is synonymous with the term “president” – it was, at the time, a rather remarkable turn of events.

Nearly two centuries later, the United States armed forces took another great leap towards modernity. The National Security Act of 1947 merged the Department of War and the Department of the Navy into a single structure called the National Military Establishment and formed a new position, the Secretary of Defense, as its head. The Act also established the Air Force as a separate branch of service; it had previously been managed by the Army. Though this marked the beginning of the transition to the structure still in place today, the new system was plagued by confusion and inefficiency, in large part because the powers granted to the Secretary of Defense were insufficient to adequately govern the different branches of service.

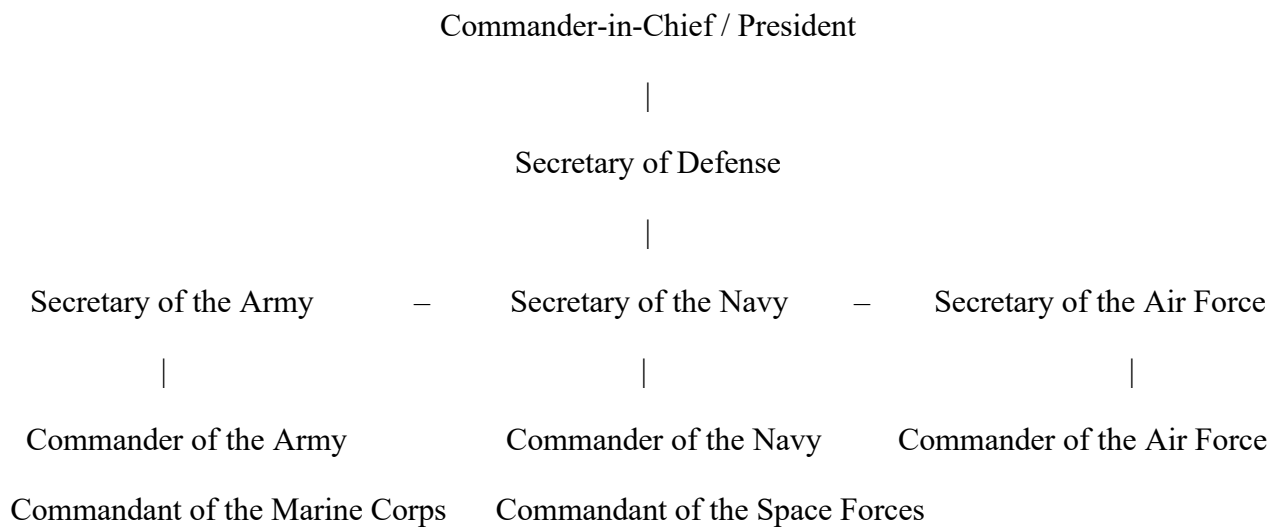
Congress remedied the issue two years later by amending the Act. It strengthened the position of Secretary of Defense, changed the name of the National Military Establishment to the Department of Defense, and established within it three distinct organizations: the Department of the Army, the Department of the Navy, and the Department of the Air Force, each of which was headed by a civilian Secretary, who in turn reported to the Secretary of Defense. The Marine

Corps was placed under the civilian control of the Department of the Navy, though its military operations remained its own. (See next page for a diagram of this structure, which remains in use today).

Today the United States military is the one of the largest forces in the world, as well as the most technologically advanced. Military personnel are stationed in 150 countries across the globe, with the largest concentrations (outside the United States itself) in Afghanistan, Germany, South Korea, Japan, and Italy.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL HIERARCHY

The top of the military hierarchy can be confusing. Though most know that the Commander-in-Chief is the current President of the United States, and therefore the top of chain of command, far fewer understand the more nuanced details. Does the Commander of the Army, for example, supersede the Secretary of the Army? To answer such questions, the chart below provides a basic overview of the organization of the upper echelons of the military command structure.



3. STRUCTURE – THE FIVE BRANCHES

Today there are five branches of the United States armed forces. They are:

- **The Army** – The main ground force of the armed forces, the Army is responsible for the protection and defense of the United States and its interests through the use of infantry, armor, and artillery. It also possesses a significant air presence, which includes both rotary- and fixed-wing craft, such as attack helicopters and jets. The Army is the largest branch of service with approximately 561,979 active-duty members, 362,015 National Guard members, and 205,281 Reservists, for a total of 1,129,275 soldiers.¹
- **The Navy** – Created along with the Army in 1775, the Navy’s mission “...is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas.” To this end, the Navy utilizes submarines, ships, and other seafaring vessels, as well as its own sizable air presence. The Navy also operates a number of aircraft carriers in coordination with the Air Force. There are approximately 321,053 active-duty members of the Navy, as well as 106,188 Reservists, for a total of 427,241. There is no Navy National Guard.²
- **The Air Force** – The youngest branch of service, the Air Force’s mission is to “*fly, fight and win...in air, space and cyberspace.*” To achieve this goal, the Air Force operates an extensive array of air carriers, jets, unmanned aircraft, and other technologies. There are 329,638 active duty servicemembers, 94,597 National Guard personnel, 68,872 Reservists, for a combined total of 493,107 Air Force personnel.³
- **The Marine Corps** – The history of the Marine Corps dates back to 1775, when members served to protect naval vessels and engage in amphibious assaults. Today they are “America’s expeditionary force...soldiers of the sea, providing forces and detachments to naval ships and shore operations.” They operate primarily as a rapid-

¹ US Army Website - <http://www.army.mil/>

² US Navy Website - <http://www.navy.mil/>

³ Air Force Website - <http://www.af.mil/>

deployment force used to secure beachheads and other forward positions. As with the other branches, the Marine Corps also has its own detachment of air support, as well as a number of naval vessels. The Marine Corps falls under the civilian command of the Department of the Navy, though its military operations are distinct from those of the Navy. There are approximately 200,827 active-duty Marines, and 40,000 Reservists, accounting for a total of 240,827 personnel.⁴

- **The Coast Guard** – Originally formed as the Revenue Cutter Service in 1790, whose mission was to enforce maritime law and aid in the collection of taxes, the Coast Guard is distinct from the other branches of military service in that it is not a part of the Department of Defense. It instead falls under the Department of Homeland Security, though control is transferable to the Department of Defense in times of war or national emergency. Today the Coast Guard operates in a number of areas, all centered around the coastal United States, including drug interdiction; search and rescue operations; ensuring the security of ports, waterways, and coasts; law enforcement; marine environment protection; and many others. There are approximately 42,000 active-duty and 7,500 members of the Coast Guard.⁵

4. COMPONENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES

Each branch of service has multiple divisions, or components.

- **Active Duty** – These servicemembers are full-time military personnel. They are contractually obligated to service with a specific branch of service for a specified amount of time. Active-duty personnel comprise approximately 59% of the US armed forces, making it the largest component by a significant margin.
- **Reserves** – Each of the branches has what is called a “reserve component” composed of individuals who work as civilians for the majority of the year. Regardless of branch, US

⁴ Marines Website - www.marines.mil

⁵ Coast Guard Website - <http://www.uscg.mil/>

Military Reserves serve a minimum of 39 days a year, usually broken into monthly drill weekends and fifteen days of annual training. Reservists can be “activated” during times of war or national emergency, meaning they are temporarily transferred to active duty.

- **National Guard** – The National Guard is a collective term for federally-recognized, state-level militias. Each of the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, independently operates a National Guard unit. Only the Army and the Air Force have National Guard units. As with the US Military Reserves, National Guard members must serve a minimum of 39 days a year, usually broken into monthly drill weekends and fifteen days of annual training. National Guard members can be activated to the federal reserve of either the Army or Air National Guard of the United States, depending on the branch of their National Guard membership. National Guard units may also be activated by their state in response to statewide emergencies and natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods.

Members of the Reserves and the National Guard receive promotions, with all associated responsibilities, duties, and privileges, just the same as active-duty personnel.

It should be noted that both the US Military Reserves and the National Guard are often referred to collectively as “reserve components,” which can lead to confusion for those unfamiliar with the finer details of military operations.

5. RANKS, RATES, AND PAY GRADES

The United States military is a highly structured, hierarchical organization. Personnel are divided by rank; individuals begin at the bottom rank and earn promotion through a combination of experience and merit.

There are two major divisions within the ranking system. Enlisted personnel comprise the lowest division, while officers comprise the highest division. There are also warrant officers, who, though technically classified as officers, exist between the two major groups. The lowest

officer, for example, outranks the highest ranking enlisted and warrant officer, even though the latter individuals may have significantly more experience.

Each rank has both a name and a pay grade. Pay grades specify an individual's ranking division – enlisted is denoted by an “E,” warrant officer by a “W,” and officer by an “O” – and a number, which represents the position within that division. Though the name of each rank may differ across the branches of service, pay grades are uniform and fully equivalent throughout the entire military. For example, O-4 represents a Major in the Army, but a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy. They are equal in rank.

The military is pyramidal within each of these divisions, meaning that the number of personnel bearing each rank decreases as you rise up the hierarchy.

In the Navy and Coast Guard, enlisted positions are referred to as “rates” rather than ranks.

- **Enlisted** – The largest ranking division is the enlisted. Enlistment typically requires that individuals be 18 years of age (17 with parental permission) and receive a high school diploma prior to their service. Individuals are also required to attend basic training, which lasts between eight and thirteen weeks. Enlisted personnel form the bulk of the United States armed forces.
 - a) **Non-commissioned Officers (NCOs)** – Mid-level and senior enlisted personnel are often referred to as “non-commissioned officers,” or NCOs. In the Navy and Coast Guard, they are referred to as “Petty Officers.”
 - b) **Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)** – Roles within the enlisted ranks are highly specialized. Everyone receives an MOS, an alphanumeric code which indicates their specific job or role. MOS 15F, for example, corresponds to the position of Aircraft Electrician in the Army. The Air Force uses Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) rather than MOS, while the Navy uses Navy Enlisted Classifications (NEV).

- **Warrant Officers** – These individuals are highly skilled and specialized, though specialties may differ dramatically between individual warrant officers and between branches of service. Warrant officers are selected from experienced enlisted personnel and are so named because they receive their positions by “warrant” of a commanding officer.

- **Officers** – Officers form the upper ranks of the US armed forces. In contrast to enlisted personnel and warrant officers, officers are typically generalists; their roles are not highly specialized, and their focus is more on strategy, command, and leadership, rather than a specific purpose or task. Each officer receives a commission from the President. As such, they are sometimes called “commissioned officers.” There are three main ways to receive a commission:
 - a) **Service Academies** – Students attending these federally-operated colleges (often referred to as military academies) receive a four-year education, as with any other college, and a diverse array of physical, cultural, and tactical training designed to prepare them for life as a commissioned officer. Upon graduation, students receive the rank of O-1. Each branch of service has its own service academy except for the Marine Corps, which shares the Naval Academy.

 - b) **Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC)** – Colleges and universities throughout the United States offer ROTC programs, operated by the military, which provide students with physical, cultural, tactical, and leadership training. ROTC programs can be two or four years in length, depending on the school. Each branch of service operates its own ROTC program (except for the Marine Corps, which shares a program with the Navy), and not all programs are available at all schools. ROTC programs often offer scholarships to exceptional candidates. Upon graduation, ROTC graduates are obligated to serve a fixed number of years (usually eight, divided into some combination of

active and reserve duty), though the exact requirement differs based on scholarship amount, branch of service, and other factors.

- c) **Officer Candidate School (OCS)** – Programs offered by each branch of service that train current military personnel and recent college graduates to become commissioned officers. The length, substance, and location of OCS differ depending on the branch. Typically, however, the program lasts between ten and seventeen weeks, and is the officer equivalent of basic training. Upon completion of OCS, the candidate receives a commission and becomes an O-1. The Air Force does not have OCS; their equivalent program is called Officer Training School (OTS).

6. VETERANS

Veterans are individuals who have previously served in the US armed forces, but no longer do so. The federal definition of a veteran is any individual who has served in the military for a single day or more. Each state also has its own criteria for determining veteran status. Reservists and National Guard members are generally not considered veterans unless they have been activated for a period. To qualify for veteran status, individuals must have served and been discharged honorably, must have received a medical discharge due to a service-related disability, or must have been permitted to retire from service.

Some organizations differentiate between regular veterans, “war veterans,” and/or “combat veterans.” War veterans are those who have served during a time of war, such as the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Iraq War, or War in Afghanistan. Combat veterans are those who participated directly in armed conflict during their time of service.

Those who qualify for veteran status are eligible for several benefits. Businesses and organizations that hire veterans are eligible for tax breaks, thereby incentivizing the employment of veterans. Veterans’ Administration hospitals (VA) offer substantial health care to veterans, particularly those who suffered significant injury or disability during their service. Veterans may

also qualify for the G.I. Bill, which provides the full tuition cost of a 4-year public university, as well as book and living allowances, to those who have at least 3 years of active-duty service since September 11, 2001.

Veterans still face significant issues, however. The unemployment rate of veterans remains high, particularly among the younger members of the group. In addition, the navigation of veteran benefits and health services can be complicated and burdensome. Many organizations have formed in recent years to resolve these challenges, as well as to assist with other common issues, such as traumatic brain injuries (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and reintegration into civilian society. With over two million Americans having fought in Iraq in Afghanistan, and with the increasing drawdown of military forces overseas, these issues – and others like them – will loom large for many years to come.

The proliferation of the internet has made connecting with veterans easier than ever before. At the same time, increased media exposure has contributed to a more widespread appreciation of the issues facing servicemembers and veterans. There has never been an easier time to get involved. If you're interested in learning more about organizations working in these areas, please see **SECTION 1** for links to some of the most significant veterans' groups and advocates.

APPENDIX B: TERMS TO KNOW

Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) – An agency of the Department of Defense charged with providing merchandise and services to military personnel, typically at low prices. Much of its profits are returned to the customer base through Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs. AAFES operates Post and Base Exchanges on Army and Air Forces installations throughout the world. The Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM) is the Navy equivalent, while the Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) and Coast Guard Exchange (CGX) handle equivalent duties, as well as several others, for their respective branches of service.

Active Duty – Full-time occupation as a part of a military force, as opposed to reserve duty.

Branch – A general term used to refer to one of the five organizations comprising the United States military, as in “branch of service.” The five branches of service, by age, are the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force.

Commissary – An on-base grocery store used by military personnel and their families. Goods are untaxed and prices are typically cheaper than civilian stores.

Commissioned Officer – Commonly referred to simply as “officers.” A term used to refer to the higher of the military’s two main promotion tracks. Officers are typically trained in leadership and management strategies, and their positions are less specific than those of the enlisted. With rare exceptions, becoming an officer requires the attainment of a 4-year degree. In addition, officers must receive their commission in one of three ways: through a service academy, such as WestPoint (Army), the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy, or the Coast Guard Academy; through Reserve Officers’ Candidate School (ROTC), a program available at many universities throughout the country and concurrent with a four-year education, which prepares individuals for military service as a commissioned officer; and Officer Candidate School (OCS), an intensive 10 to 17 week course that teaches individuals the skills necessary to become a commissioned officer. The Air Force equivalent is Officer Training School (OTS).

Court-martial – A military court that determines the guilt or innocence of a member of the armed forces, in accordance with military law. Courts-martial are convened in the event of a

violation of the **Uniform Code of Military Justice**, which governs the behavior of military members.

Delta Dental – The dental insurance provider of retirees of the U.S. armed forces.

Department of Defense – The Executive Department of the Government of the United States of America responsible for the management of the armed forces. The Department is headed by the civilian Secretary of Defense. The Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force are each likewise headed by a civilian Secretary. The Marine Corps does not have an independent department, and is ran by the Department of the Navy. The Coast Guard is unique among the military branches in that it belongs not to the Department of Defense, but to the Department of Homeland Security.

Discharge – A term used to refer to the release of an individual from his or her contractual obligation to serve in the United States military. Individuals may be discharged due to the end of their agreed-upon service term, poor or illegal behavior, injury, and many other reasons. There are many types of discharge, such as honorable, for those who have exceeded the standards during their time of service. The type of discharge received may impact the ability of an individual to obtain post-service benefits, such as VA health care and the G.I. Bill.

Enlisted – Refers to those ranks below commissioned and warrant officers. Enlisted ranks also include noncommissioned officers. The majority of the armed forces are enlisted personnel.

G.I. Bill – Formally known as the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, the G.I. Bill provides extensive benefits to those who have served for at least 90 days have not been dishonorably discharged. G.I. Bill benefits are most used to pay for college, though technical training may also be eligible. Recent legislation has expanded the Bill, and it now provides a housing allowance, a \$1,000 book allowance, and the full tuition cost of a public university or \$17,500 annually towards the cost of a private university. Active-duty personnel and most Reservists and National Guardsmen are eligible for G.I. Bill benefits provided they meet the above requirements.

Installation – A generic term used to refer to a military post or base. There are many types of installations, such as forts, bases, and camps.

Fort – A term used by the Army to refer to a permanent military post with fortifications. Examples: Fort Drum, New York (Army).

Camp – Originally used to refer to temporary or semi-permanent military outposts. Army installations in foreign countries such as South Korea, for example, are ostensibly temporary, and are therefore typically prefixed with “Camp” rather than “Fort.” Many domestic Marine Corps are also referred to as “camps.” Examples: Camp Pendleton, California (Marine Corps); Camp Casey, South Korea (Army).

Base – Air Force and Navy installations, whether domestic or abroad, are referred to as bases. Examples: Ramstein Air Base, Germany (Air Force); Naval Base San Diego, California (Navy).

Joint Chiefs of Staff – A group of senior officers that advises the Secretary of Defense, the President, and other relevant parties on military matters. The group is headed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and composed of a Vice Chairman, the National Guard Bureau Chief, and the Military Service Chiefs from each branch of service. The Coast Guard is not represented on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Judge Advocate General’s Corps (JAG) – Refers to the legal specialty within the armed forces. Each branch of service has its own JAG Corps. Members, typically referred to as Judge Advocates or JAGs, are regular members of the armed forces, and may be either active duty or of the Reserve Component. They are full-fledged officers, with all the rights and privileges thereof. Their usual purpose is to provide legal counsel to the command to which they are assigned. Senior Judge Advocates may also serve as judges in courts-martial.

Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) – A 9-character code used by the Army and the Marine Corps to identify a type of military job. The Air Force uses Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) for the same purpose, while the Navy uses the Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC) system.

National Guard – A federally recognized reserve military force composed of state militia members from each of the fifty states, plus the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. At most times, each National Guard unit is managed by its respective state. As a

result, National Guard duties often include responding to state-level emergencies, such as natural disasters. During times of national emergency or war, however, the National Guard may be mobilized by the federal government, at which time the members become a part of the National Guard of the United States. The vast majority of National Guardsmen are part-time, and their participation is in addition to their full-time civilian employment. The National Guard of the United States has only two branches: the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard. The National Guard is unique in that members may be called upon to service their individual states or the federal government, as required.

Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) / Petty Officer – A term used to refer to certain higher-ranking enlisted members of the armed forces. NCO is used in the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps, while Petty Officer is used in Navy and the Coast Guard. NCOs/Petty Officers can be further subdivided into junior and senior classes depending on rank.

Officer Candidate School (OCS) – A training program that allows college graduates, noncommissioned officers, and other members of the armed forces to become a commissioned officer. Programs last between 10 and 17 weeks are designed to be academically and physically intensive. Curriculum generally involves lessons on strategy, leadership, and military culture. Each branch of service operates its own OCS; the Air Force’s equivalent is Officer Training School, or OTS.

On-base – Many servicemembers refer to housing and other facilities on a military installation as being “on-base,” regardless of the installation’s actual designation. For example, housing on Ft. Benning is still referred to as “on-base housing,” despite the use of “fort” in the nomenclature.

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) – The official name used by the U.S. government to refer to the Iraq War. Operation Iraqi Freedom was officially ended on December 18, 2011.

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) – The official name used by the U.S. government to refer to the War in Afghanistan.

Permanent Change of Station (PCS) – The official relocation of an active duty servicemember to a different duty location. PCS are often informally referred to as simply “relocations,” particularly in reference to the civilian members of a military family.

Post Exchange / Base Exchange (PX/BX) – Retail stores operating on military installations across the world. Most resemble department stores or strip malls and offer a similar array of goods and services. PX refers to an exchange on an Army post; BX refers to an exchange on an Air Force Base. There is also Navy Exchanges (NEX), Marine Corps Exchanges (MCX), and Coast Guard Exchanges (CGX).

Rank – Refers to an individual’s position and level of seniority within their branch of service. Each of the five branches has its own ranks, which are divided between Enlisted positions and Officer positions. Ranks can be notated as E-X (for enlisted) or O-X (for officers), where X represents a number between 1 and 10, 1 being the lowest rank and 10 the highest.

Reserve – A federally-operated, regionally-based military force. Each branch of the United States military has a reserve component, including the Coast Guard. Members of the reserves are part-time and serve a minimum of 39 days a year. During times of war or national emergency, the reserves may be “activated” to full-time status.

Reserve Components – A collective term referring to those who serve in either the National Guard or the Reserves. Members of the reserve components typically serve 39 days per year in times of peace, though they can be activated to active duty as required. The reserve components may occasionally be referred to simply as the “reserves,” though the National Guard and U.S. Military Reserves are distinct entities.

Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) – A program offered at many four-year universities that trains students in strategy, leadership, and military culture. At the end of the program, ROTC members become commissioned officers with the rank of O-1 (either 2nd Lieutenant or Ensign, depending on branch of service). ROTC programs typically offer participating student’s substantial scholarships, with the stipulation that they are required to serve four years as active duty and four years as a member of the Individual Ready Reserve upon graduation. Each branch of service operates its own ROTC program. There may be additional requirements of the ROTC program depending on the branch of service.

Service Academies – Federal academies for the education and training of commissioned officers of the United States armed forces. Each of the five branches of the military has its own service academy: United States Military Academy/WestPoint (Army); United States Naval Academy/Annapolis (Navy and Marine Corps); United States Air Force Academy (Air Force). and the United States Coast Guard Academy (Coast Guard). Upon graduation, the students receive the rank of either 2nd Lieutenant or Ensign, both of which designed as O-1, depending on branch of service.

TRICARE – A health care program of the United States Department of Defense Military Health System. TRICARE provides health insurance and benefits to military personnel, retirees, and family members, as well as some qualifying members of the Reserve Component. TRICARE insurance is divided into three regions: North, South, and West. Dental insurance is provided through United Concordia (for servicemembers and their families) or Delta Dental (for retirees).

Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) – The body of laws governing the behavior U.S. military members, colloquially known as military law. Violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice are tried in a court-martial.

Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (USERRA) – Signed into law in 1994, USERRA is designed to protect the employment of those members of the Reserves and National Guard who are called to active duty. USERRA states that all returning servicemembers must be reemployed by their employer in the job they would have attained had they not been for military service, with the same level of seniority, status, pay, and other benefits they would have received. USERRA also mandates that employer's reasonable efforts be made by employers to enable returning employees to refresh and/or update relevant work-related skills.

United Concordia – The dental insurance provider of active-duty military members and their families.

United Services Automobile Association (USAA) – A financial services company that offers banking, investing, and insurance exclusively to those who currently serve in the military, who have served in the past, or who are directly related to an individual who serves or has served. While not a military- or federally operated company, USAA's exclusive emphasis on military-related members has resulted in a close association with many members of the armed forces.

Warrant Officer – A highly specialized rank and career track within the military. Warrant officers may have very different responsibilities depending on their branch of service and rank. Warrant officers rank above enlisted military personnel but below commissioned officers. Warrant officers can be promoted from W-1, the lowest rank, to chief warrant officers (CW-2 through CW-5), at which point they receive a commission from the President of the United States. They still rank below the regular commissioned officers, however (O-1 through O-10).

Yellow Ribbon Program – The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program (Yellow Ribbon Program) is a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. This program allows institutions of higher learning (degree granting institutions) in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. The institution can contribute up to 50% of those expenses and VA will match the same amount as the institution.

Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) – Not to be confused with the GI Bill provision known as the “Yellow Ribbon Program,” the Yellow YRRP is a DoD-wide effort to promote the well-being of National Guard and Reserve members, their families, and communities, by connecting them with resources throughout the deployment cycle. Through YRRP events, Service members and loved ones connect with local resources before, during, and after deployments.