



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration

Military to Civilian Readiness: The Past, Present, and Future of the Transition Process

Service members who are transitioning from active duty in the military to veteran-status typically face a combination of life transitions, which can include residential moves, new jobs or periods of unemployment, changes in household structure, and other changes. This transition process is a normal experience for all veterans.

A new research paper, authored by MITRE and available on the Department of Veterans Affairs' Transition Assistance Program (VA TAP) website, provides an overview of the current state of the transition process for members of the military and support options available within the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other partners.

Using qualitative evidence from previous studies, interviews, focus groups, and expert observation, the paper outlines existing gaps in the transition process and changes currently in progress to remedy those gaps.

Key Findings

Just as bootcamp integrates service members into the military, a similarly immersive experience is needed to support their return to civilian life. Researchers also found:

- Going through the transition from service member to veteran is an expected, shared experience for those in military service.
- The transition from military to civilian status can be overwhelming for veterans, with many potential services offered and lots of changes occurring at the same time.
- Peers offer a valuable support system to veterans, since they have a personal understanding of the challenges faced.

Recommendations for Future Study

To address knowledge gaps and support future improvements to transition supports and other benefits the paper suggests:

- Further study on challenges faced by different veterans (for example, how the transition might differ by rank, number of deployments, age, gender, geographic location, etc.).
- Further study on areas in which military families could use increased support.
- Working toward a better understanding of how and when peer relationships might assist veterans during and after the moment of transition.
- Working toward a more complete and clear definition of what “veteran friendly” means (for example, on a college campus) with the goal of approaching a consistent definition.

Ensuring a Seamless Transition

The overall goal of support during this process is to provide a seamless transition by connecting service members and veterans to the services and benefits they have earned at the times they need them, helping them achieve a sense of well-being across all areas of their lives.

The complete research paper is available at benefits.va.gov/transition.