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Value of a Vet Challenge: Certification, License, and Experience

Many military work roles would require licensure and certifications, if performed in the civilian sector. Civilian licensing of otherwise skilled veterans is commonly cited by employers as an impediment to fully leveraging the skills and experiences of military veterans.

Licensure and certification requirements are commonly preceded by education and training, which varies between military and civilian sectors. However, the skills are often similar or identical, and the training and education is also similar in scope and content (between military and civilian sectors). Two primary components are at issue for employers that cite licensing and certification as an impediment to hiring veterans:

- A lack of understanding related to the veteran's training and education as it correlates to the civilian equivalency (and how may the equivalency be ascertained)
- A lack of understanding related to the duties/activities of the veteran's work-role in the military, as it correlates to the requirements associated with civilian licensing and certification standards.

To a large extent, licensure and certification is a state-level issue; that is, individual states are responsible for vocational licensing related to most work roles requiring civilian certification. Legislative and executive policy is beginning to address certification and licensure for education, training, and skills obtained in military service, so as to allow easy transfer of licensure to take place as military members (and families) transfer from one state and jurisdiction to another post-service and not only during service. These policy initiatives continue to ensure the integrity of the license or certification but expedite attainment for those already qualified. These policies include license reciprocity, reduced documentation requirements for veterans, expedited reviews of licensing/certification applications, temporary licensure, and others.

Initiatives in several states, and for several target occupations including nursing, teaching, and childcare, were highlighted in a Treasury/DOD joint report on occupational licensing focused on spouses who move to support serving family members.



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As mentioned, there are also efforts underway to streamline the process through which education, training, and experience gained as a result of military service can be applied to generate a civilian certification or license. Based on a review of those efforts, New York State has made the most significant progress in this area. For example, in New York, a commercial driver's licensure (CDL) has been streamlined for veterans who held similar roles in the military, as have some positions in healthcare and education. Efforts are also currently underway in New York to reduce the training and experience required of many private security and law enforcement certifications, for those individuals who performed similar work roles while serving in the military. Other states have taken steps similar to New York for emergency medical technician and ambulance driver roles, and there is an ongoing effort on the federal level for those occupations that require federal licensure.

All that said, from an employer perspective the general consensus is that state regulatory agencies have been slow to address this important issue, and ongoing initiatives are disparate and uncoordinated. While some states have taken significant and meaningful steps to acknowledge military training and experience in their licensing and certification programs (e.g., New York, Pennsylvania, Washington), others have taken limited or no action. As it is in the best interest of both the veteran and the employer that military training and experience can be leveraged in the form of a civilian license or certification, some firms have taken proactive steps to overcome the challenges related to certification, and by doing so have been able to leverage the skills, training and experience of veterans in the workforce.



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