



## GUIDES AND PUBLICATION

### Value of a Veteran Challenge: Deployment Issues and Challenges

*Employer-focused concerns related to the potential deployment of employees (Guard & Reserve) represented another challenge mentioned by companies.*

Importantly, these concerns were not necessarily focused on the potential of a deployment as an obstacle to hiring, but instead focused on the implications for career development and family support. However, others have reported that deployment could be a concern for some employers.

For the family, the deployment of a spouse to a combat zone represents a challenge of significant magnitude.<sup>1</sup> Deployment means increased family responsibilities, financial issues, isolation, and fear for their spouse's safety, which causes anxiety, loneliness, sadness, and a feeling of being overwhelmed.<sup>2</sup> This has a direct impact on the company that employs a deployed military member or somebody whose family member is deployed; hence, awareness of veteran deployments is essential to respond effectively to the needs of employees and their families. In addition to the voluntary measures which employers may take, there are protections in Federal and state laws which apply to deployed military members and their families, and to their return to work.<sup>3</sup> Employers, which engage deployed members in the workforce, that prepare for their deployments and their return- to-work plans, may be better positioned to meet workforce needs, plan for salary expenditures, temporary workers, job duty transitions, and more.

Other policies may include assistance with insurance or other benefit premiums; vacation time payouts to support family members; emergency assistance, including loans or grants; loans from profit sharing or similar benefits; family usage of employer facilities or benefits (e.g., daycare, fitness facilities, or discounts); and other similar benefits. Informal benefits may be regular care packages, communications from peers and leadership, integration of family members at company events, recognition of deployed members, and other activities designed to promote awareness and support of the employee and their family during periods of service. In addition to supporting families and deployed service members, these actions may support a more engaged workforce and support employee retention.





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An example of an integrated program was established by TriWest to address families during deployments. The program creates a community and raises awareness about deployments of Guard or Reserve members. A focus is placed on educating peer employees on deployment and its impact. Program components include deployment parties, a blue star flag on employee workspaces, informal invitations of deployed employees' family members to peers' homes for holidays, and more. In addition to creating awareness amongst employees, TriWest provides salary adjustments to meet financial needs and provide flexibility for deployed staff. Beyond benefits, communication of the company's engagement is an integral component of the program. For example, the CEO sends letters once a month to TriWest's deployed National Guard and Reserve members, and the letters include a telephone card so that they can stay connected with their loved ones.

Such activities require active self-identification, to assist and support military and veteran employees and their families. This is the company's business and employee justification for significant self-identification efforts. Attributing this to the benefits provided to the employee and family, TriWest indicates it has never been sued related to their inquiries on veteran status or related supports, and that they don't consider identification efforts to have legal risks which outweigh their benefit to both the company and their veterans. Other companies, such as Google, provide tools to veterans and their families which provide the ability to stay in communication, as well as encouragement and advice on how to effectively use those tools in circumstances unique to military members, veterans and family members. Engagement and concern for employees may increase morale among other employees and may reduce turnover intention among veterans and other employees.



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### Citations:

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln, A., Swift, E., & Shorteno-Fraser, M. (2008). Psychological adjustment and treatment of children and families with parents deployed in military combat. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 64(8), 984-992.

<sup>2</sup> American Psychological Association Task Force on Military Deployment Services for Youth, Families and Service Members (2007). *The psychological needs of US military service members and their families: A preliminary report*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Retrieved from <http://www.ptsd.ne.gov/publications/military-deployment-task-force-report.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Schieberl, J. & Leo, C.P. (2007). The Employers' Legal Obligations to Employees in the Military. *Graziadio Business Review*, 10 (3), Retrieved from <http://gbr.pepperdine.edu/2010/08/the-employers-legal-obligations-to-employees-in-the-military/>; U.S. Department of Labor. (n.d.) Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Information. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/>.



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