

## **VETERANS' ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY REPORT**

January 24, 2007

A Veterans' Roundtable was conducted at the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) in Tallahassee on January 24, 2007. Approximately 50 staff from the Regional Workforce Boards (RWB), U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA), Florida Department of Corrections, AWI, Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI) and others were in attendance or participated via teleconference.

### **Florida's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program**

Margarita Cocker, State VR&E Director, discussed Florida's VR&E program. The VR&E Program is an employment and training program facilitated by DVOP Specialists, in partnership with VA Counselors, to assist disabled veterans who are being trained/retrained and rehabilitated for new careers by the VA. DVOP and LVER staff provide workforce and other services to disabled veterans participating in the VR&E Program. Currently, DVOP Specialists are assigned to VR&E Centers in Pensacola, Ft. Walton Beach, Jacksonville, Orlando, St. Petersburg (Regional VA Office), and Ft. Lauderdale.

VR&E Orientations for new disabled veteran applicants now include the DVOP Specialist assigned to the respective VR&E Center, who enters these applicants into Employ Florida Marketplace. A standardized form and process-flow is being developed and will be used by all Florida VR&E DVOP Specialists for the dissemination of VR&E cases to the local One-Stop Career Center DVOP/LVER staff and subsequent case management of VR&E participants.

It was emphasized during the discussion that productivity and performance are of paramount importance in the VR&E Program. Effective performance is based on total VR&E disabled veteran participants, referrals to employment, and entered employment.

Florida anticipates a major increase in returning injured and disabled military members and veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan and many will need retraining and rehabilitation services. Committing dedicated DVOP staff to selected VA VR&E Centers around the State will enhance and support the economic recovery and reemployment of transitioning wounded and injured service members and veterans by identifying barriers to employment or reemployment and addressing those needs.

### **Florida's Transitioning Incarcerated Veterans' Program (TIVP)**

Alonzo Galloway, IVTP DVOP Specialist assigned to the Florida Crown Workforce Career Center in Lake City (RWB 7), discussed Florida's IVTP. Alonzo and David Robison, IVTP DVOP Specialist assigned to the One-Stop Career Center in Marianna

(RWB 3), provide intensive case management and other workforce services to incarcerated veterans who are transitioning from correctional centers in their Regions and geographically contiguous Regions. The assignment of dedicated performance-driven DVOP Specialists to provide IVTP services to incarcerated veterans has established a true collaborative partnership between Florida's workforce system and the Florida Department of Corrections in the provision of all of the necessary services that transitioning incarcerated veterans need prior to release. It has also exposed more incarcerated veterans to employment and training programs available through Florida's One-Stop Career Centers and to the State's network of DVOP Specialists and LVER staff. Satellite One-Stop Career Centers will also be created at certain correctional centers providing a broad spectrum of workforce services, including job referrals, placement assistance, resume assistance, labor market information, bonding assistance, tax credit eligibility, job skills workshops, job fairs, etc., to incarcerated veterans, especially as they prepare for the eventual transition to society and employment.

IVTP Power Point Presentation is attached.

### **Florida Department of Corrections (DOC) Recruitment of Veterans**

Colonel Curtis Lupo, Director of Recruitment and Training Management, Florida DOC, discussed his agency's statewide recruitment campaign and initiative. The DOC plans on a significant increase in their hiring efforts in 2007 to fill positions such as Correctional Officer, Correctional Probation Officer, Health Care, Administrative, etc. Colonel Lupo emphasized that the DOC especially wants to take advantage of Florida's One-Stop Career Centers, Transition Assistance Programs (TAP), Veterans' Job Fairs and statewide network of DVOP and LVER staff for assistance in filling their jobs. The Florida DOC will make every effort to recruit veterans for their excellent career opportunities. Mitch Collier and Shawn Forehand will soon conduct training on Florida's workforce system, and Veterans' Program for the DOC's Regional Recruiters. For additional information on the Florida DOC, visit: <http://fldocjobs.com>.

DOC Recruitment video has been placed on AWI Veterans' Program website ([www.floridajobs.org/PDG/veterans.html](http://www.floridajobs.org/PDG/veterans.html)).

### **FAST TRAC Entrepreneurial Training for Veterans**

Mitch Collier discussed the FAST TRAC Entrepreneurial Training for veterans and disabled veterans. The Florida Small Business Development Center will submit a proposal to WFI to provide entrepreneurial training for veterans. AWI will again be tasked to administer this new phase of FAST TRAC training. The previous FAST TRAC Program for veterans was a real success and the commencement of new FAST TRAC training is timely. FAST TRAC is a nationally recognized entrepreneurial training program that uses a specially developed curriculum, certified facilitators and materials to provide entrepreneurial training. As with the previous FAST TRAC, the courses will be coordinated with the local One-Stop Career Centers, DVOP/LVER staff, conducted around the State in key veteran markets, and performance goals established.

## **Salute to America's Heroes**

Shawn Forehand discussed the recent "Salute to America's Heroes" Conference in Orlando. The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes was created to provide a way for individuals, corporations and others to help the severely wounded and disabled Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans and their families rebuild their lives.

In December 2006 the coalition held a Road to Recovery Conference in Orlando Florida. This event was conducted at the Coronado Springs Resort at Walt Disney World, on December 13-17, 2006. Approximately 300 people attended including an estimated 100 severely disabled military personnel from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and their families. The AWI Mobile One-Stop, DVOP/LVER staff from Workforce Central Florida (WCF), and Military Family Employment Advocates from Regions 8 and 15 were also available to provide a broad spectrum of workforce services. Additional services included the following: Emergency Aid providing direct financial aid to soldiers and their families in crisis; Family Support Network providing free, private housing available to family members of wounded soldiers who are recuperating at military and VA hospitals far from home; Career Network with programs that assist wounded veterans (and their spouses) in transitioning from the military to exploring career options in the civilian workplace; Homes for Heroes providing disability-adapted homes that are nearly cost-free for wheelchair-bound and blind veterans; and Road to Recovery Conference providing an all-expense paid educational and service event for wounded heroes and their families.

A variety of additional information venues and services were also available at this event, including the FDVA, VA, and other veterans' advocates and service providers. A Job Fair was also included in this event, including employers such as the VA, U.S. Secret Service, Office of Personnel Management, Northrup Grumman, and many others. The AWI Mobile One-Stop Career Center was also on site. NBC News and other news outlets provided media coverage of this very successful event.

A "Salutes to America's Heroes" Conference is scheduled for early December 2007 for an audience of an estimated 1,000 severely disabled military personnel and their families.

## **Florida Dept. of Veterans' Affairs Update – Update**

Courtney Heidelberg, Public Relations Manager, FDVA, provided an update on the FDVA. Admiral Leroy Collins, Jr., was recently appointed by Governor Crist to be the new Executive Director of the FDVA. The FDVA is the State's veterans' service agency that provides information, advocacy and long-term health care to Florida's veterans. AWI and the FDVA continue to collaborate in a partnership of efforts to identify and serve Florida's returning disabled veterans, veterans and their families. This partnership also includes mutual participation in each agency's regular events and programs, i.e.

Veterans' Job Fairs, FDVA semi-annual conferences, AWI Veterans' Program Training, Transition Assistance Programs (TAP), etc.

### Miscellaneous

- **Military Family Employment Advocacy Program** - Military Family Employment Advocates are currently assigned to One-Stop Career Centers in Ft. Walton Beach (RWB 2), Panama City (RWB 4), Jacksonville (RWB 8), Tampa Bay (RWB 15), and Miami/Dade (RWB 23). Program is being enhanced and expanded with additional positions assigned to One-Stop Career Centers in Pensacola (RWB 1), Orlando (RWB 12), Cocoa (RWB 13), and one additional position assigned to Ft. Walton Beach (RWB 2), due to the impact of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) activities. This program expansion will empower Florida's workforce system to broaden the scope of workforce services provided to the State's military spouses and families, especially the spouses and families of severely injured military members returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan theatres of conflict. Linda King, who was recently appointed as AWI's Military Family Employment Advocacy Program Manager, was introduced during the roundtable.
- **Employ Florida Market Place** – Much of the discussion focused on the new Employ Florida Marketplace and issues to be expected with any new Internet-Based system. Any corrections should be submitted through the normal communication process.
- **Regional Reports** – The Regions discussed some of the Veterans' Program "Best Practices" and other veterans' activities in their respective areas.

The Veterans' Roundtable adjourned at 11:45 am.