

PRIORITY IN EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE
FOR
UNITED STATES ARMED FORCE VETERANS

Senate Bill 936
G.S. 165-44

**REPORT TO THE NORTH
CAROLINA JOINT COMMISSION
ON GOVERNMENTAL
OPERATIONS**

November 22, 2011

North Carolina Department of Commerce
Division of Workforce Development

Background

On June 3, 1997, the General Assembly ratified Senate Bill 936, G.S. 165-44, a statute that requires eligible veterans to be given priority service in employment and training programs. The Bill indicates that veterans' priority shall apply to any State agency, department or institution, any county, city or other political subdivision of the State, any board or commission and any other public or private recipient that receives federal or State job training funds and provides employment and training assistance including but not limited to employability assessments, support services referrals, and vocational and educational counseling. The Bill further indicated that priority in service is defined as providing all eligible veterans who register or otherwise apply and qualify for services the opportunity to participate in or otherwise receive the services provided before that opportunity is extended to other registered applicants.

The Bill directs the North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development to submit a compliance report to the Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations annually.

Introduction

The North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Development, acting on behalf of the Governor, is the recipient of funds granted through the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 (P.L. 105-220). The Division is the administrative and oversight agency for these funds which are used to provide employability training and re-training activities to eligible Youth, Adults and Dislocated Workers in the state. The resources flow to the Division through the U.S. Department of Labor which has regulatory power and policy-making responsibility for activities provided with these funds. WIA resources are required to be allocated to the 23 local Workforce Development Boards in the state who oversee the delivery of local services to eligible individuals. These services are provided through a series of JobLink Career Centers scattered the state that house a number of employment and training programs to serve the state's citizens.

The U.S. Department of Labor has provided guidance and policy oversight to the States on the implementation of the Jobs for Veterans' Act (P.L. 107-288). This law also establishes a priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses for services funded through the Workforce Investment Act.

Implementation

North Carolina's JobLink Career Centers ensure that services are broadly available and address the employability and support needs of the persons and businesses in the state. JobLink staff offer core employment activities including self-service and staff-assisted services, more intensive services which may include in-depth assessments and career counseling, and resources for occupational skills training.

While JobLink Career Center staff serve many special populations, the federal Jobs For Veterans' Act dictates that each state have dedicated Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPS) strategically assigned to service delivery points throughout the JobLink Career Center system to ensure accessibility to all veterans with employment or training needs. In addition, DVOP and LVER staff are assigned to provide employment services to service members who are transitioning out of the military at the six military installations in North Carolina. All individuals selected for these positions to serve veterans are themselves qualified veterans, which conforms to the guidelines in the law.

Priority of service to veterans and others who meet eligibility requirements has been honored in North Carolina for decades. Throughout the workforce delivery system, priority of service is enhanced by the State's electronic job matching system which matches only registered veterans to new job orders on the day they are listed - 24 hours ahead of non-veterans, unless there are no qualified veterans. LVERs monitor priority of service to veterans to ensure that staff complies with policies which stipulate that qualified veterans are given an opportunity to apply for jobs ahead of non-veterans.

A major role and responsibility of the dedicated veterans' services staff is the capacity building of other service providers to enhance their knowledge of veterans' priority of service in employment and training programs. LVER/DVOP staff have frequent contact with other JobLink partners to keep them informed of current veterans' employment and training issues and to assist in providing direct services to veterans. LVER/DVOP staff members attend staff meetings to provide updates on veteran services, to answer questions from staff and to discuss needed services. These staff members also collaborate with the management and staff of these centers to provide outreach services for veterans, including homeless veterans, and to plan and conduct job fairs and other activities to promote the employment of veteran customers. Once a veteran's employment and training needs have been identified, the staff of JobLink partners ensures that appropriate services are provided.

Strategies to address individual needs include literacy and basic skills programs, resources for occupational skills training, job accommodations, assistive technologies, disability awareness training and other activities that may address barriers and support achievement of positive employment outcomes. North Carolina has established and continues to adhere to a priority of service to veterans, as well as to low-income individuals and public assistance recipients in accordance with WIA provisions.

Compliance

The comparison of the ratio of service between veterans and non-veterans has been determined to be the measure of compliance. To establish that veterans were given priority of service, the ratio of number of veterans that applied for services and were determined eligible compared to the number of veterans served should not be substantially less than the ratio of non-veterans that applied for services and were determined eligible compared to the number of non-veterans served.

The table below includes only applicants and Workforce Investment Act program enrollees for the July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011 program year.

WIA Program	# Vets Eligible	# Vets Served	Vets Service Ratio	# Non-Vets Eligible	# Non-Vets Served	Non-Vet Service Ratio
WIA Title I-B Adult	457	447	97.8%	8041	7899	98.2%
WIA Title I-B Dislocated Workers	1014	1008	99.4%	11678	11591	99.3%
WIA Title I-B Youth	2	2	100.0%	5440	5409	99.4%

In addition to the veterans served through the traditional Workforce Investment Act-funded programs, a special Career Advancement Account grant received from the U.S. Department of Labor has just been concluded that provided training services to the spouses of active duty military personnel. Over 1,600 eligible spouses of Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base personnel were provided training resources and support services over the last three years. Spouses received funding for tuition, books, supplies and support services for training in Financial Services, Information Technology, Health Care Education, Construction Trades, Human Resources, Hospitality, and Homeland Security occupations. As of this date, more than 450 of the enrollees have entered employment.

A just-completed project funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act supported communities impacted by the expansion of military personnel due to base realignments. The Veterans Initiative Project (VIP) provided training, retraining and skill certification opportunities in high-demand, high-growth sectors to eligible veterans and military spouses in the 10-county region surrounding Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. This project was a collaborative partnership between the Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, North Carolina's Eastern Region Military Growth Task Force, the NC Department of Commerce, the US Department of Labor, Coastal Carolina Community College and local JobLink Career Centers. From September 15, 2009 to June 15, 2011:

- 331 veterans and military spouses were served
- 242 completed their training
- 184 entered employment. 109 (or 60%) entered employment related to their training.