



VETERANS VOICE

Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services Newsletter

February 2022

Skilled Trade Workers - Alternative Education Paths

Transitioning from military to civilian life is a stressful and often overwhelming experience. The pressure by family, friends and society to earn a degree and start a successful career can weigh heavy on the shoulders of our transitioning service members and Veterans. Many believe that the only way to succeed is to get a 4-year degree, but is it always the right choice?

February is Career and Technical Education Month and VA's Education Service wants to celebrate the importance of skilled trade workers by highlighting the available alternative education paths. Here are a few ways to utilize your benefits, if the "traditional" track is not the route you want to take:

1. [On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship](#). Using the GI Bill, you can learn a trade while also receiving funds for books, supplies and housing. US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the 2020 median pay for plumbers, pipefitters and steamfitters is \$56,330. VA has partnered with hundreds of local unions and approved employers across the nation in a variety of skilled trades, from plumbing to hotel management. Once you are in an approved program (which may require a training contract), you will begin to earn wages in addition to the tax-free housing, books and supplies payments.

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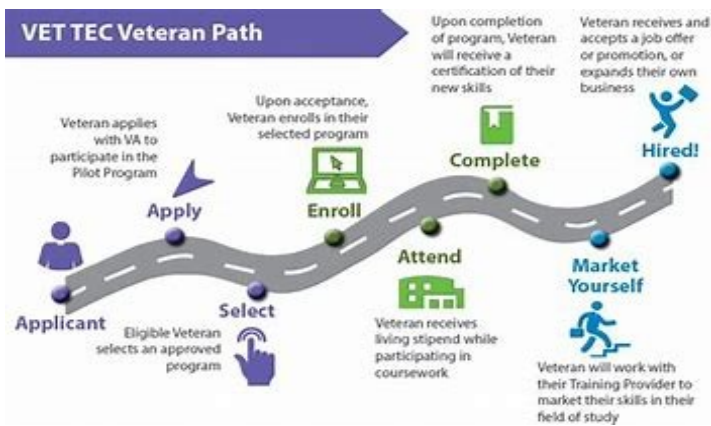
“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

- Nelson Mandela

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2. [Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses \(VET TEC\)](#). In collaboration with companies across the nation, training providers connect you with a training program to meet high-demand occupation areas, such as computer software and programming, information science and media applications.

3. [Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program \(VRRAP\)](#) is a great option for Veterans who have lost their job because of COVID-19 and are seeking a new opportunity. The Department of Labor identified high-demand jobs in fields such as education, health care and technology. To be eligible, you must be at least 22 years old, but not older than 66; be unemployed because of the COVID-19 pandemic; and not be rated as totally disabled because you can't work; and not be enrolled in a federal or state jobs program. In addition, you cannot be eligible for other federal education and training benefits. VRRAP will provide up to 12 months of tuition and fees as well as a monthly housing allowance based on Post-9/11 GI Bill rates.

4. Non-College Degree Programs. You don't have to sacrifice earning potential by choosing a skilled trade. Growth and career advancement are attainable opportunities for those who specialize in a certain skill or trade. In the construction field, you can become a foreman or superintendent. As a truck driver or cosmetologist, you can obtain an independent license and be your own boss. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected a 19% growth rate for cosmetology in the next decade. For heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, it is anticipated that 231,100 job openings will open yearly between 2020 - 2030. We encourage Veterans, service members and their dependents to review the many approved Non-College Degree Programs offered on the VA [website](#).

For Career and Technical Education Month, VA encourages you to explore the education and training options available. If you have questions or need assistance, please [Ask VA](#) or contact the Educational Call Center at 888-442-4551 between 7 AM and 6 PM CT, Monday - Friday.

National Library Lover's Month

It's Library Lover's Month and it seems to have come at just the right time as many local libraries are struggling during the economic downturn. So why love your local library? Libraries are a sanctuary away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life; they offer security and peace and quiet. They are also a place where you can focus surrounded by likeminded people with the desire to acquire knowledge.

It's important to understand that not everything is available on the internet, libraries can have vast digital stores of qualitative and quantitative information escaping from opinion led snippets and snapshots from online. There may be some crossover of information but in most cases libraries are a much more economically viable solution when looking for information than the internet.

It's also important to know that libraries offer services that aren't available on the internet, including free assistance in finding obscure information and borrowing a book that may not be available in the admittedly immense catalogue one can find on the internet. There's more to a library than just the books too! There are meetings that gather there. There's also magazines and periodicals, microfiche of local newspapers reaching far back into antiquity, and that's just a start!

Why not push against the declining attendance of libraries and go and learn something new that will expand your knowledge of who you are, or where you live?

Veterans, Active Duty Can Take Advantage of Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program

Veterans and active duty service members can get one step closer to student loan forgiveness through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program. You will need to submit your application by October 31, 2022.

By cancelling loans after 10 years, PSLF removes the burden of student debt on public servants, makes it possible for many borrowers to stay in their jobs, and entices others to work in high-need fields.

Months on Active Duty Count

The Department of Education will allow months spent on active duty to count toward PSLF, even if the service member's loans were on a deferment or forbearance rather than in active repayment. This change addresses one major challenge service members face in accessing PSLF.

Service members on active duty can qualify for student loan deferments and forbearances that help them through periods in which service inhibits their ability to make payments. But too often, members of the military find out that those same deferments or forbearances granted while they served our country did not count toward PSLF.

This change ensures that members of the military will not need to focus on their student loans while serving our country. Federal Student Aid will develop and implement a process to address periods of student loan deferments and forbearance for active-duty service members and will update affected borrowers to let them know what they need to do to take advantage of this change.

Giving Federal Employees Credit

The Department of Education will begin automatically giving employees credit for PSLF by matching Department of Education data with information held by other federal agencies about service members and the federal workforce. These matches will help the Department of Education identify who may also be eligible but cannot benefit automatically, like those with FFEL loans.

Qualifying Employers

Any U.S. federal, state, local or tribal government agency is considered a government employer for the PSLF Program. This includes employers such as the U.S. military, public elementary and secondary schools, public colleges and universities, public child and family service agencies, and special government districts (including entities such as public transportation, water, bridge district, or housing authorities). A government contractor isn't considered a government employer. You can visit the [Public Service Loan Forgiveness \(PSLF\) Help Tool](#), which will help you determine if an employer is considered a qualifying employer under the PSLF Program.

Income Doesn't Matter

There is no income requirement to qualify for PSLF. However, since your required monthly payment amount under most of the qualifying PSLF repayment plans is based on your income, your income level over the course of your public service employment might be a factor in determining whether you have a remaining loan balance to be forgiven after making 120 qualifying payments.

If you know that you have qualifying employment that you have not yet certified with the Department of Education, you can certify that employment now by using the PSLF Help Tool at www.StudentAid.gov/pslf.

You will need to submit a PSLF form so the Department of Education can review your loans under the simplified rules and determine whether your current or past employers qualify for PSLF. You can submit this form through the PSLF Help Tool at StudentAid.gov/PSLF. Because of the expected influx of applicants, you may see some delays in having your application processed.

Upcoming Event

MVMEC OPEN HOUSE

&

Vietnam War/WWII Allied & Axis Reenactments

Free Admission

Saturday, April 30th, 2022

9:30 am to 3:00 pm



WHERE:

4300 Poberezny Road

Oshkosh, WI 54902

(920) 426-8615

www.mvmec.org

ALL DAY PRESENTATIONS and DISPLAYS

10:00 am Present Colors (Flag Raising)

11:00 am On The Hour Tours (All Day)

11:30 am WWII Allied and Axis Reenactment Battle

12:30 pm Weapon Demo (see displays)

1:30 pm Vietnam War Reenactment Battle

2:30 pm Naval History Presentation



Food
and Beverages
available
for purchase
by AMVETS Post 7



CONTACT US

Winnebago County
Veterans Service Office

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112 Otter St.
Oshkosh, WI 54901
(920) 232-3400

Neenah Location

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Stay informed about benefits; join our e-mail list.
Send a request to:

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Visit us on the web at:

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For a list of more events,
check out our [calendar!](#)