

APCO

Military Employment

Guidebook for ECCs

1) Transitioning Military Personnel

2) Military Spouses

3) Veterans

4) National Guard/Reserves

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Executive Summary

Emergency Communication Centers (ECC) are experiencing chronic problems of understaffing and high turnover rates as a national trend. Headlines are seemingly printed daily across the country on the topic, and is confirmed by APCO International, who commissioned a study on the matter in partnership with George Mason University's Center for Social Science Research, published in July 2018. Key findings in this study include:

- While staffing pressures were found in ECCs of all sizes, large ECCs struggle the most with staffing levels.
- Average retention rate of 71% indicates turnover has grown as a problem for ECCs.

The challenge at hand for every ECC is hiring, training, and retaining talent. In March of 2021, APCO International commissioned a Task Force to explore one potential solution to broaden the talent pool from which Emergency Communications Specialists (ECS) are hired while supporting another valued community: military veterans and spouses of active-duty service members.

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide for ECCs to initiate engagement with the veteran and military spouse communities to tap into the broad, and often times confusing, networks to access talent that are known for understanding commitment to service and dedication to mission.

Background

A brief examination of the potential that expanding the 'normal' recruiting pools that ECCs tend to draw from for emergency communications candidates to include veterans and military spouses is heavily weighted toward positive data and commentary.

A. Military Veterans:

A quick internet search shows articles from many recognized business leaders who endorse hiring veterans as a good business practice. Why? Veterans bring the following attributes and characteristics to the workplace:

- Proven leadership and leadership readiness
- Mission-focused approach to work
- Experience working in diverse teams and organizations
- Adaptable and immediate contributors
- Strong work ethics
- Strong performance under pressure
- Creative problem-solving
- Self-starter
- Integrity
- Technical skills (military experience exposes individuals to advanced technology or technical training)
- Loyalty (The military is adept at institutional socialization and cultivating loyalty. A trait civilian employers have found among their employees who are veterans. A low turnover rate can lead to a higher return on investment for businesses.)

- Additionally, veterans have already received world-class training in many areas:
 - Challenging and purposeful high-stress exercises
 - Technical military occupational specialties
 - Professional military education courses
 - Critical “soft skills,” including ethics and leadership

Studies have shown veterans are more productive and have higher retention rates than their civilian counterparts. For example, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families published a brief, drawing from academic literature, that suggests a robust, specific, and compelling business case for hiring veterans.

Read it here: [The Business Case for Hiring a Veteran: Beyond the Cliches.](#)

B. Military Spouses:

American military spouses, who number approximately 690,000, are a diverse population. Like their active-duty spouses, they come from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, and bring a diversity of skills to the labor market. Military families typically move every two to three years, requiring frequent labor market adjustments for those who do not have remote work arrangements. In anticipation of frequent moves, employers may be reluctant to hire military spouses or they may offer these workers a lower wage in an attempt to recover turnover costs. Moreover, short cycles in each location may make it more difficult for military spouses to recoup the costs of occupational licensing and other fixed costs of labor force participation.

A survey conducted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2017) indicates military spouses experience higher rates of unemployment than do other adults, and Federal data back up this claim. Based on a survey of 1,273 active-duty military members and veterans, the U.S. Chamber estimates that military spouses and spouses of recent veterans had a 16% unemployment rate in 2017. Other estimates differ, but still reflect nearly twice the rate for the overall U.S. population between 18 and 65.

It is clear, military spouses are far less likely to participate in the labor market than the general working age population, 57% compared to 76% (in 2016), respectively, according to the American Community Survey (ACS). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that military spouse unemployment rate was 22% in 2019 (statistically the same as 24% in 2017 and each survey year back to 2012).

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce also reports that many military bases are located more than 50 miles from an urban center.

For the individual ECC that is located near a military installation that may readily access these communities, the following information may serve as a guide to opening the door to a talent base that has not been previously considered or accessed in a proactive manner.

Engaging with Resources

A. Military Installations:

Where do ECCs begin to find new talent on a military installation? In this case, identify the “Who” you need to engage with. Most military installations have a “Family Readiness Center” (FRC) or “Family Support Center” (FSC). Depending on the branch of service, this center may have slight

variations to include “Airman” or “Fleet”, etc. A quick Google search with the installation name and “family services” should yield the result you need to include a website with contact information, business hours, etc.

1. This office serves as a resource for education and career information, to include coordinating and hosting the U.S. Department of Labor facilitated ‘TAP’ (Transition Assistance Program) class that is mandatory for all transitioning military members to help prepare them for entering the civilian labor market. The amount and regularity of the TAP classes provided by the support center will depend on the size of the installation and how many active-duty personnel are stationed there (or in the surrounding area). In addition to this service, support centers will also serve as an access point to the following services.
 - a. FSCs usually hosts Community Career Fairs a couple times a year and may coordinate with Chamber of Commerce’s Hiring Our Heroes Career Summit program.
 - b. Social media: FSCs typically announce upcoming job opportunities, employment fairs, hiring events, etc..
 - c. FSCs will accept your information on a flyer or employment listings to be posted in the office, which will require the following information:
 - Name of organization
 - Position title and number of positions to be filled
 - Opening/closing dates
 - Point of contact information
 - Location
 - How to apply
 - Job description (optional)
 - Salary (optional)
 - QR code (optional)

For additional recruiting efforts, it is likely the FRC/FSC representative will know the points of contact for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce ‘Hiring Our Heroes’ program and the local U.S. Department of Labor office. More information on these organizations is included below.

2. Next, “How” to help prepare for your first engagement on base with the service center representative.
 - a. Physical access to the military installation will be restricted. If you do not have access to visit the physical location, all contact may be required by email/phone/video conference, or you may request visitor access via the support center. In any case, the following guidelines and steps for preparation will likely assist you in having a successful engagement.
 - b. Have prepared questions to determine if the military installation “need” aligns with your objective, which is to recruit and hire transitioning active-duty members and military spouses. As well, it is recommended to have questions that will allow the representative to participate in the conversation, for example:
 - How many transitioning personnel are there annually at the military installation?

- What is the average contact with spouses looking for education or career opportunity information annually?
 - For instance, Buckley Space Force Base (SFB) located near Denver, CO estimates the number of spouses seeking assistance finding employment to be less than 10 total in a given year is not a viable recruiting pool.
 - What types of jobs do transitioning service members have?
 - For instance, Buckley SFB has a very high percentage of engineering and intelligence related fields. Unfortunately, these are fields where they tend to find jobs with large defense focused organizations, like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, CACI Int'l, etc. is not a viable recruiting pool.
- c. Know the important data points for the industry to convey why the support center should assist you:
- Title 10 U.S. Code § 1784 - Employment opportunities for military spouses, directs the Secretary of Defense to have a program in place to assist military spouses in finding employment and providing 'portable skills', among other requirements. To achieve this statutory requirement, the Secretary of Defense has put in place the Spouse Ambassador Network, a committed group of organizations within the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP). The MSEP leverages their community networks to raise awareness of military spouse education and employment resources in communities where military spouses live and work. Within this program military spouses have the opportunity to take advantage of the services, support, and networking opportunities provided by these organizations. As a Department of Defense Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) initiative, the MSEP is an employment and career partnership that serves spouses from all military services. The program has grown to hundreds of partner employers who have committed to recruit, hire, promote and retain military spouses in portable careers.
 - Being familiar with the TAP class and the SECO/MSEP programs will help initiate the discussion in the right direction.
 - *Your singular ECC does not meet the criteria to serve in the SECO/MSEP programs directly, but you ARE an employer that can provide 'portable skills' in an honorable profession.*
 - Desire to provide "portable skills" (spouses)
 - How many ECCs are in your area?
 - Does the military installation have an ECC?
 - Is there already a partnership with the military installation ECC and an area ECC, e.g., fail-over arrangements, do your agencies respond to the military installation (fire, EMS)?
- d. Be ready to provide the "Why" you are engaging with the support center in very clear terms. Use data to shape your talking points and flow of conversation:
- First, what is your personal story? Relate it to your target audience; were you an active duty service member or spouse? What is your experience in the industry that initiated your effort for recruiting transitioning members and member spouses?

- Second, use your talking points based on the data you researched:
 - Industry facts and numbers.
 - Any legislative initiatives that may be relevant?
 - For instance, the upcoming mega-infrastructure bill is expected to include up to \$15B for next generation 911 Internet Protocol based infrastructure, or initiatives to re-classify emergency communicators as ‘first responders’, etc..
 - The status of the ECS position is becoming more operational in nature with the increasing technical capability of Computer Aided Dispatch systems. In addition to connectivity with other centers, imagery, supplemental data, and geographic information systems overlays.
 - Then engage the representative with your questions to determine viability of a partnership.
- e. Finally, what is your “Ask”? For this engagement, you specifically need to know in what ways the support center can help you. For instance:
- Provide links to social media.
 - Post openings on job boards (physical and web-based).
 - Provide points of contacts with job fair organizers.
 - Instructions on how to advertise in base publications.
 - Opportunity to pitch openings at TAP classes.
 - Use this opportunity to develop a working relationship. Whatever level of assistance is provided, have a plan moving forward and acknowledge what role the support center will have.
 - Have a prepared leave-behind product (flyer, informational packet, business card, etc.).
 - Solidify the partnership with a follow-up email restating the assistance you require and providing any documentation that may have been requested.

B. U.S Department of Labor:

Another resource is the U.S. Department of Labor, who will have a representative in a nearby county office with someone assigned as a Regional Veterans Employment Coordinator (RVEC). It is their job to facilitate hiring veterans (and their spouses) through a free-of-charge business service provided to local area employers. This includes hiring events, networking events, job fairs, job e-mail blasts, and access to the state's workforce website.

1. Find your RVEC. They engage with local, regional, and national employers and connect them with Federal, state, and local resources to facilitate veterans’ employment. RVECs also develop and leverage partnerships with government, non-government and industry stakeholders in the veteran employment space to include training providers and industry associations (This means they are literally required to assist you in connecting with veterans).
 - a. RVEC will be assigned in an ‘American Job Center’ or maybe referred to as a ‘Workforce Center’. To find where your local Workforce Center is to connect with a RVEC, go to

CareerOneStop American Job Center Finder at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/employers/rvec>.

- b. This will take you to the U.S. Department of Labor 'Workforce Center' that serves your county and provide you with a link to a profile page specific to that center, and include the address, email, phone number, services description provided at that particular office, etc.
 2. Using the format developed for the support center, call your local RVEC and they will provide you with a detailed assessment of how they can help you find, recruit, and hire veterans and military spouses in the area through their existing resources.
- C. Other National Military Hiring and Job Placement Resources:

APCO has compiled a list of several national organizations and programs that serve as ambassadors to military veterans and military spouses for recruiting, hiring, and job placement. For example:

- Blue Star Families
- Five and Thrive
- Heroes Haven
- Indeed for Military
- Military Spouse Jobs
- Military Spouse Professional Network
- SAA Programs
- Support Our Soldiers
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- United Service Organizations (USO)
- Vet Jobs
- Veteran-Friendly Employers

The APCO Military National Resource List has additional information on the above organizations and more. This information includes the best point of contact for each organization, resources or programs available, program websites, and email contact information if available.

This resource list can be found at: [APCO Human Resources Toolbox](#)

D. National Guard/Reserves:

Most states have one or more of the employment support programs described below to support the employment of National Guard and Reserve service members. If active in a particular state these programs will have a Program Support Specialist point of contact at the state level or multiple Program Support Specialist point of contacts broken down by regions within the state.

1. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Programs (ESGR): ESGR promotes employer support for Guard and Reserve service by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of applicable laws, and assisting in the resolution of conflicts between employers and Servicemembers. It provides employment opportunities by partnering with Yellow Ribbon, public and private entities to train Servicemembers and families on resume development, interview process, and job fairs.

- a. Their mission of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is a Department of Defense program that develops and promotes supportive work environments for Service members in the Reserve Components through outreach, recognition, and educational opportunities that increase awareness of applicable laws, and resolves employment conflicts between the Servicemembers and their employers.
2. Reserve Component Employment Enhancement Programs (RCEEP): An employment partnership initiative designed to provide relevant and timely job-placement assistance to National Guard Service Members and their spouses. The program's specialized education, training, and job-search services will enhance participant's abilities to obtain and retain meaningful employment. Their primary objective is to help participants identify aptitudes and abilities honed in the military, arrive at a plan for transferring them to a civilian job setting, and assist program participants in understanding and mastering key job-search resources and services for optimal job placement.
 - a. These programs work with local companies by explaining the benefits of hiring a National Guard service member or their spouse. When a service member participant applies for a job, the Employment and Career Counselor makes sure the HR manager is aware the application has been made by a member of the National Guard.
3. Employment Support Programs (ESP): A National Guard Employment Support Program is vital in supporting our National Guard service members in finding meaningful careers and job opportunities as they face the challenges of military life, whether mobilized or in a steady state posture. These program's missions are to provide employment opportunities and options to develop career ready service members, prepared/resilient family members, and successfully transitioned members integrated with their community.