

Women Veterans in Transition

Workingwomen in Transition: A Research Project of BPW Foundation



Recommendations for Private and Public Sectors to Support Women Veterans

1. Increase collaboration between social and business organizations to educate women veterans about veteran benefits and services.
2. Employers and workplaces should learn to understand and appreciate the unique leadership qualities and transferable skills that women veterans have to offer.
3. Create women- and veteran-friendly workplaces; ensure that the structure and workplace culture is reflective.
4. Encourage women service members to begin their transition before they separate from the military including accessing the Transition Assistance Program.
5. Provide opportunities for integration into existing leadership training within workplaces and through organizations.
6. Women veterans need to network and seek mentors; join veterans' service organizations and professional organizations.
7. Public/private partnerships should be established to conduct research on the career transition, adjustment experiences and needs of all veterans.
8. Partners and employers must collect and share success stories and lessons learned.
9. Provide an extended time frame for transition support to ensure success.
10. Employers and policy makers should understand that many workplace challenges experienced by women veterans are shared by all working women.

For more on the *Women Veterans in Transition* research project, go to www.bpwfoundation.org/WVIT

Women Veterans in Transition Research Project: An Overview

On October 19, 2007, BPW Foundation launched its *Women Veterans in Transition* research project by disseminating its initial report, *Understanding the Complexity of Women Veterans' Career Transitions*. Respondents to BPW Foundation's 2007 survey of women veterans stated that the transition was difficult and wished they had begun preparation earlier. Upon entering the civilian workforce, many gravitated to the public sector; they sought workplaces that offered fair compensation, opportunities for advancement, training and professional development opportunities and benefits including family leave options, flexible schedules, retirement plans and paid leave. To download the full report, visit www.bpwfoundation.org/WVIT; for additional resources visit www.womenjoiningforces.org.

More than 2,150 women veterans accessed the survey; 1,629 completed it and 50 percent of those opted in to participate in continued research.

Initial results from the pilot study of women veterans' career transition experiences indicated that the transition from the military into the civilian workforce is a multi-dimensional process that lasts over an extended period, including after a civilian job has been secured. As women veterans enter the civilian workforce, their workplace requirements mirror that of other women and they experience many of the same challenges.

Based on both these results and conversations with other organizations that support women veterans, BPW Foundation offers practical recommendations to provide greater support to women veterans.

2008- The *Women Veterans in Transition* micro web site was created to showcase the initial report and subsequent research. BPW Foundation includes veteran-specific, workplace practices in its *Successful Workplaces Digest*. A veteran category was created for our ever-popular blog, *Young Women Misbehavin'*.

2009- With the continued support of DAV, a *Women Joining Forces* Facebook page was launched as well as the *Dear Jane* letter-writing campaign – women veterans write letters offering advice to OEF and OIF women soldiers still deployed. Hosted a focus group of women veterans employed in the civilian workforce.

2010- Hosting a national Summit to increase awareness of women veterans and to establish a national fund to provide ongoing support to meet their needs.

This survey was completed with the generous support of the Harley-Davidson Foundation, Inc. and Disabled American Veterans Charitable Service Trust.

Demographics of respondents

- Represent all branches of the military (Army (46 percent), Navy (24 percent), Air Force (22 percent), Marine Corps (10 percent);
- 75 percent are between the ages of 30-40;
- Racial breakdown: White/Non-Hispanic (50 percent), Black/NH (30 percent), Hispanic (10 percent);
- Average time of service is 12 years;
- 86 percent are enlisted (1,398) and 14 percent officers (220);
- Average age of military separation is 33 years;
- Average time out of service is seven years;
- Almost 50 percent reported having a disability;
- 80 percent had some college at time of separation which increased to 90 percent at time of survey.