

**Strategies for Implementing
Priority of Service to Veterans
in Department of Labor Programs**

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Executive Summary

Enacted on November 7, 2002, the *Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-288) has the overall objective of “revising and improving employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans.” One provision of the Act requires workforce development programs funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Labor to provide priority of service to veterans and, under certain circumstances, spouses of veterans (see Appendix A for a complete listing of the 20 programs affected by this provision).

The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA) contracted with The Urban Institute to collect and synthesize information about service delivery for veterans among some programs that are already providing veterans with priority of service. Since the Employment Service (ES) funded under the *Wagner Peysner Act* already had a veterans’ priority of service requirement, there is some experience in the workforce development system that can be drawn upon for implementing the *Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002*. The strategies for serving veterans that are described in this report pre-date P.L. 107-288, are meant to be illustrative not exhaustive, and serve as examples of the way in which future priority workforce development services *may be* provided to veterans. It is not the purpose of this report, however, to supercede guidance regarding implementation of the *Jobs for Veterans Act* that has been and will continue to be provided by the U.S. Department of Labor.¹

Research Questions and Methodology

This report is based on work completed over a seven-month period from March to September 2003 and addresses four categories of research questions:

- How is priority of service currently implemented for veterans? Which strategies seem to be relatively effective in informing veterans of services available, reaching veterans, and serving veterans? How are self-service activities and other electronic tools currently used in serving veterans?
- Are there strategies being used to apply priority of service to other populations that might be useful in serving veterans? What does priority of service mean within the context of the various DOL workforce development programs?

¹ Program operators of affected programs should consult the U.S. Department of Labor Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 5-03 issued on September 16, 2003 and subsequent guidance issued separately for each DOL/ETA affected program.

- Given the service delivery strategies that are currently being used to apply priority of service provisions, what alternative strategies, or models of strategies, might be considered for expanding the veterans' priority more generally? How can self-service activities and other electronic tools best integrate veterans' priority?
- What types of technical assistance might be most useful to state and local programs as they refine or adopt veteran priority of service policies?

In order to address these question areas, this report is based on a four-pronged methodology including:

- *Information gathering*, including a background review of available literature or reports on existing priority of service to veterans.
- *Hands-on exploration of existing electronic tools* including state labor department, workforce investment agency, or employment department websites. This electronic review was designed to help understand how various websites or electronic tools currently target veterans, as well as how they might be adapted to improve a focus on veterans.
- *Discussions with experts* to identify existing service delivery models in the programs to which the *Jobs for Veterans Act* applies. The experts included representatives of numerous national workforce development member organizations and veterans' organizations, and state and local veterans' representatives (e.g., DVETs and DVOPS and LVERs). In addition, input was received from 18 states identified through the discussions with experts. Of these 18 states, nine are states with the greatest population of veterans and together represent nearly 48 percent of the total veteran population in the United States.
- *Site Contacts*. After consultation with experts, three local programs were selected and visited to conduct individual interviews and observe service delivery procedures—Grayslake, Illinois; Durham, North Carolina; and Washington, DC.

Through these discussions and visits, various strategies that are currently being used to apply service priority were identified, both those that are procedural in nature (e.g., using specialists such as DVOPs and LVERs) and those that are transactional or interactive (e.g., self-service resources, electronic tools, job listings).

Findings

Discussions with experts, in-depth interviews with local veterans' representatives, and visits to a small number of local programs revealed a wide range of current program strategies that are used to provide priority of service to veterans, as well as some strategies currently used in serving non-veteran populations (e.g., individuals with disabilities, migrant and seasonal farmworkers) that may be useful for providing veterans' priority of service. A broad range of service delivery strategies is presented, in keeping with the high degree of flexibility that characterizes the workforce investment system and the discretion that program administrators have in designing systems and service delivery models.

Two categories of program strategies are identified:

- *Procedural Strategies.* State and local workforce development offices currently use several strategies to serve veterans within their regular office operations; and
- *Electronic Web-Based and Other Self-Service Strategies.* Given the increased reliance on the Internet in recent years, there has been an explosion in web-based, self-service strategies in the publicly-funded workforce development system.

Procedural strategies that give veterans priority can be described as those involving decisions about the ways in which staff, services, and/or workforce development systems are designed and operated. Five types of procedural strategies were identified including:

- *Outreach Activities.* Outreach activities currently being used by workforce development programs target both potential program participants (e.g., veterans or other special population groups) as well as employers. In some cases, programs have developed more directed outreach strategies to serve veterans with special difficulty accessing services such as incarcerated or homeless veterans. Some states also target outreach to employers—informing employers of the availability of 24-hour job order holds for veteran applicants or emphasizing the valuable skills that veterans bring to the workplace.
- *Intake and Registration Procedures.* Registration procedures that identify veteran status for all registrants or customers who enter a local One-Stop Center can facilitate priority of service at the initial as well as at subsequent visits. Veteran status can be determined immediately upon entry to the One-Stop Center or via pre-registration online. Some One-Stop Centers offer incentives to veterans who register such as additional assistance for veterans provided by veterans' representatives.
- *Client Flow Adaptations.* The general flow of customers through a One-Stop system can sometimes be modified in ways that improve services to veterans at various points in the system, from the front desk to referrals to programs within and outside of the One-Stop Center. Examples of client flow adaptations include allowing veterans to bypass general reception, and scheduling assessment times reserved for veterans.
- *Role of DVOPs and LVERs.* As One-Stop Centers evolve, the role of veterans' specialists is changing in some locations, as DVOPs and LVERs learn to take fuller advantage of all the services available in a One-Stop Center environment, and as One-Stop Center managers learn how to integrate veterans' staff into One-Stop Center systems. DVOPs and LVERs are involved in outreach to employers, participation in job fairs (some for veterans-only), job development, providing assistance with electronic job search tools, and performance monitoring, in addition to monitoring job postings, providing individual job search, and facilitating the provision of intensive services to veterans.
- *Integration/collaboration with other programs.* One-Stop Centers provide an opportunity to integrate veterans' priority into all office/program services by

cross-training staff or by developing or revising state or local procedures, administrative policies, or guidelines regarding service to veterans through each program. A number of states already offer veterans' priority of service in other Department of Labor programs.

Service priority also operates within an interactive, self-directed, and predominantly electronic service environment. State and local workforce agencies and program operators have expanded the concept of service priority beyond the temporal dimension (i.e., veterans or other priority groups get the "first shot" at a service slot or job opening) to include numerous alternative strategies for self-service priority of service. These strategies fit within two categories:

1. *Informational Strategies.* Several state and local websites offer veteran-specific legislative, entitlement, and contact information that surpasses the detail and scope of information provided to other subpopulations or the general public. In addition, the majority of, if not all, local One-Stop Centers have non-web-based, self-service strategies including employment and training resource rooms and access to local job listings.

The electronic service environment was examined through an Internet exploration for all 50 states and the District of Columbia that included labor, workforce, or employment department websites. The results of this search are presented in Appendix B.

Four prototypical web-based models were identified:

- The *Integrated Model* combines extensive information on the state website with numerous links to external sources of information. Examples include: Alaska and California.
- The *Centralized Model* contains nearly all information on the website, with relatively few links to external sources. Examples include: New Hampshire and Oklahoma.
- The *Gateway Model* uses numerous links to gather together a rich source of varied information, while on-site content is minimal. Examples include: Colorado and Iowa (some regions).
- The *Generalized Model* requires that veterans access the same employment information and resources as the general public, with little or no veteran-specific information. Examples include: Georgia and Hawaii.

2. *Job Matching Strategies.* Many state job matching websites provide veterans with the option of self-identifying, which allows for various priority options within the job matching system. States that have job matching systems have implemented a two-pronged strategy—highlighting veteran applicants for employers while simultaneously encouraging veterans to self-identify. Generally, registering applicants are presented early-on with a screen requesting information on veteran status. Veterans are encouraged to self-identify by being told that the information will be made available to employers searching for workers.

In addition, some states have pursued more informal options to increase veterans' priority in job matching systems such as providing veteran job applicants with more extensive assistance in entering resumes or other information into the job matching database. This reduces the extent to which such systems are truly models of self-service, but shows the flexibility with which different resources can be combined to implement priority of service in an electronic environment.

Conclusions

The *Jobs for Veterans Act* gives states and localities much latitude in implementing priority of service for veterans in DOL-funded programs. This approach is consistent with the flexibility afforded by the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA)*, in allowing local workforce development boards and One-Stop Centers to determine how best to meet the employment and training needs of veterans. Based on discussions with experts and on-site interviews and observations, there are three suggested approaches that program administrators may want to consider when implementing the new priority of service provisions.

1. Establish Priority of Service Goals. Performance measurement and goal-setting can help to clarify the intent of priority of service and serve as a motivating force for all program staff. Possible goals include both those already included in workforce development programs and newly developed goals that are veteran-specific. Extending veterans' service measures (albeit with somewhat different target numbers) to non-veteran and non-*Wagner-Peyser* staff will increase awareness of veterans' priority of service in DOL programs and is one way to encourage all staff to: include veteran status as an inquiry for all customers, document veteran status in all programs, and coordinate with veterans' representatives and other staff of veterans' employment programs or services to assure that appropriate referrals are made.

Technical assistance should focus on clarification of DOL/ETA guidance as it develops, performance measurement theory and practice, and meetings that bring together staff from different programs to discuss definitions and goals for priority of service.

2. Consider Local Office Procedural Modifications. Procedural modifications that can be uniquely tailored to local operations to improve priority of service to veterans include, but are not limited to:

- *Increased interprogram/interagency collaboration* to better coordinate with co-located partner programs;
- *Changes in registration and/or assessment procedures* that may help program operators ensure that each veteran seen obtains the services and benefits to which he or she is entitled, and receives services that address individual needs as determined through assessment and/or case management;
- *Modifications to data collection and reporting systems.* To fulfill DOL's requirement under the *Jobs for Veterans Act* to report on whether veterans are receiving

priority of service and whether they are being fully served by programs and grants covered by the legislation, program operators will need to collect veteran status information from individuals served by their programs or grants;²

- *Physical changes at the program site.* Possible changes may be as basic as improving signage, directing veterans to the veterans' service area and allowing them to bypass the main reception desk, or informing veterans that they will receive priority of service for a wide range of programs.

Program operators would benefit from technical assistance that shares the growing body of research literature on best practices. This literature could form the basis of technical assistance meetings, conference calls, or webcasts. In addition, on-site consulting related to client flow and staff training would be useful to programs as they implement priority of service.

3. Improve Self-Service Resources and Electronic Strategies. A number of state websites hold job orders for veterans, bring veterans to the top of the applicant list, and/or "flag" job applications from veterans. State workforce development websites can also be redesigned to improve access by and information for veterans. Strategies include additional links to other programs that provide priority of service to veterans, "veterans-only" job listings, and online e-mail links to veterans' representatives.

Based on the review of state websites, the following criteria may be useful in evaluating websites and identifying areas for improvement:

- *Visibility of information.* Are veterans' services/priority of service mentioned on the home page? Are there obvious links?
- *Types of information* (e.g., applicable legislation, job opportunities, training opportunities, other services),
- *Active as well as passive features.* Can the user e-mail for on-line assistance? Is an electronic response provided? Is a toll-free number posted on the website?
- *Evaluation component.* Is there a user satisfaction survey on the site? Are user comments or suggestions solicited?

Analysis of website statistics such as number of users or "hits" per month, time spent at the site or at a particular page, search topics being used, and where possible, user characteristics will assist program operators in evaluating and improving their electronic tools.

Technical assistance should inform program operators and staff about the various electronic options that are available, the advantages and disadvantages of each, as well as the costs and ease of implementation. Training on the specific technologies selected and on

² U.S. Department of Labor. "Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 5-03." September 2003.

monitoring and evaluating the use of the technology will enable program operators and staff to use electronic tools to their full potential.

Implementing priority of service as required under the *Jobs for Veterans Act* is in its early stages and it will evolve with the WIA One-Stop Career Center system. This report presents promising practices for serving veterans that have already been implemented in ES programs, as well as lessons learned from programs serving other special populations. This information, along with additional guidance and technical assistance from DOL/ETA, will assist One-Stop Center partners as they continue to work together to ensure priority of service to veterans and improve services to all One-Stop Center customers.

I. Introduction

The *Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-288) has the overall objective of “revising and improving employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans.” One provision of the Act requires all job training programs funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to provide priority of service to veterans and, under certain circumstances, spouses of veterans. While the *Wagner-Peyser Act* already had a veterans’ priority of service requirement for the Employment Service (ES), the 2002 law, through section 4215 in Chapter 42 of Title 38 of the U.S. Code, extends the priority to all DOL-funded workforce development programs. More specifically, veterans and some categories of spouses of veterans are:

“...entitled to priority of service under any qualified job training program if the person otherwise meets the eligibility requirements for participation in such program.”

The affected programs include any “workforce preparation, development, or delivery program or service that is directly funded, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.”

The U.S. Department of Labor contracted with The Urban Institute to collect and synthesize information about the service delivery context of the programs that are required to respond to this legislation. The main purpose of this report is to review the types of strategies that are currently being used to give priority to veterans in workforce development programs in order to assist states, Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), and program operators in implementing the priority of service provision of P.L. 107-288.

Implementing the provision requires state and local workforce development agencies³ to examine their various programs and delivery systems to ensure that: (1) veterans are provided information about and access to the full range of various benefits and services that may be obtained through workforce development programs and related entities or providers; and (2) each veteran who applies to covered programs or who is assisted by the programs is informed about the employment-related rights and benefits⁴ to which veterans are entitled under this act.

³ The phrase “state and local workforce development agencies” includes all operators of DOL-funded workforce development programs.

⁴ “Employment-related rights and benefits” to which veterans are entitled under this legislation vary for the 20 DOL programs affected by this legislation. In this report, we use this general term recognizing that the way in which veterans’ priority interacts with existing program requirements will vary from one program to the next.

As noted in the legislation, programs that must provide priority of service include: (1) programs or services that use technology to assist individuals in accessing workforce development resources (e.g., labor market information, career assessment tools, etc.); (2) programs under the public employment service system, One-Stop Centers, or the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998* (WIA); (3) demonstration or temporary programs funded by DOL; and (4) any other workforce development program targeted to specific groups (see Appendix A of the report for a complete listing of the 20 DOL programs affected by the legislation).

To effectively implement the veterans' priority provision, some program administrators may need to enhance existing service delivery activities or develop new strategies. Some experience for providing priority services to veterans already exists in the workforce development field. For example, the employment service system funded under the *Wagner-Peyser Act* includes a priority of service requirement for veterans. To help implement veterans' priority, veterans' specialists—Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs)—have for decades been assigned to local Employment Service (ES) offices to assist the public labor exchange staff in providing services to veterans.

With the implementation of WIA, *Wagner-Peyser* funded services, DVOP, LVER, and other employment-related services and programs were integrated into a nationwide network of One-Stop Career Centers. The accumulated veterans' service experience in the ES, DVOP, and LVER programs may be useful to program administrators in expanding the priority of service now required for all workforce development programs by the 2002 *Jobs for Veterans Act*.

This report addresses four categories of research questions:

1. How is priority of service currently implemented for veterans? Which strategies seem to be relatively effective in informing veterans of services available, reaching veterans, and serving veterans? How are self-service activities and other electronic tools currently used in serving veterans?
2. Are there strategies being used to apply priority of service to other populations that might be useful in serving veterans? What does priority of service mean within the context of the various DOL workforce development programs?
3. Given the service delivery strategies that are currently being used to apply priority of service provisions, what strategies or models might be considered for expanding the veterans' priority more generally? How can self-service activities and other electronic tools best integrate veterans' priority?

4. What types of technical assistance might be useful to state and local programs as they refine or adopt veterans' priority of service policies?

This report is based on a four-pronged methodology including:

Information Gathering, including a background review of available literature or reports on existing priority of service to veterans. Project staff contacted regional office representatives and other key informants to solicit existing information.

Hands-on exploration of existing electronic tools such as state and local workforce investment agency websites. This electronic review was designed to help understand how various websites or electronic tools currently target veterans (e.g., for information, referral sources, or special links), as well as how they might be adapted to improve a focus on veterans (within the context of the overall programs as appropriate).

Discussions with Experts to identify existing service delivery methods for applying priority of service to veterans and other special populations. "Experts" were identified in conjunction with DOL, including members of the DOL/ETA Advisory Group⁵ and discussions with State Directors for Veterans' Employment and Training (DVETs). Organizations and experts contacted included: National Association of State Workforce Agencies, the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals, the National Association of Workforce Boards, National Governors' Association, National Association of Counties, U.S. Conference of Mayors, Disabled American Veterans, The American Legion, The National Veterans Training Institute, Rapid Response, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, Association of Service Disabled Veterans, and the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs. In addition, project staff interviewed DVETs, other veterans' representatives (e.g., DVOPs and LVERs), and received input from the following 18 states: Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, DC, and Wyoming.⁶

⁵ The informal DOL/ETA Advisory Group, established to guide this project, included representatives from the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), Office of Workforce Investment, Office of National Programs, Office of the Assistant Secretary, Office of National Response, and Office of Policy Development, Evaluation, and Research.

⁶ These 18 states include the nine states with the greatest population of veterans; nine of these states (California, Florida, Texas, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and North Carolina) include 48 percent of the total veteran population of the United States and Puerto Rico according to 2000

Through these discussions, the project team identified various strategies that are currently being used to apply service priority, both those that are procedural in nature (e.g., using specialists such as DVOPs and LVERs) and those that are transactional or interactive (e.g., self-service resources, electronic tools, job listings). Experts were asked to suggest strategies that the project team might examine more closely (e.g., state or local agencies, programs, or One-Stop Centers doing a particularly good job of serving veterans, those with interesting or useful websites or electronic resources).

Site Contacts. Based on the background review and discussions above, administrators in targeted states/local agencies and programs were contacted to learn more about their services, targeting, and strategies regarding veterans. After consultation with experts, the project team selected and visited three local programs to conduct individual interviews and observe service delivery procedures—Grayslake, Illinois; Durham, North Carolina; and Washington, DC.

This report identifies a range of service delivery strategies that can be considered when applying priority of service. Throughout this report, special emphasis is given to self-service approaches, particularly web-based strategies. A broad range of strategies is presented in keeping with the high degree of flexibility that characterizes the still evolving workforce investment system. The strategies described in this report are meant to illustrate veterans' priority, however, they are not meant to be exhaustive. For further clarification, administrators of the affected programs should consult DOL general guidance in Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 5-03 issued on September 16, 2003 and subsequent individual guidance issued separately for each affected ETA program.

The next section provides a historic overview of priority of service to veterans and summarizes key provisions of the new law. Section III describes strategies currently being used to provide priority service to veterans, and Section IV concludes with key strategies and issues that program administrators may wish to consider.

U.S. Census Bureau data. U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. 2000. "Census 2000 Veteran Population in the U.S. and Puerto Rico by State." http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Census2000/CenData/states_vets.pdf. (Accessed April 18, 2003.)

II. Background

This section presents the historic context in which the *Jobs for Veterans Act* was passed and a summary of the key provisions of the law. The *Jobs for Veterans Act* (P.L. 107-288) enacted on November 7, 2002 follows on a long history of public employment and training programs and services for both veterans and non-veterans.

Historic Overview

Wagner-Peyser, DVOP and LVER. Veterans have had service priority in the Employment Service (ES) since the early days of the national system of publicly-funded ES offices established under the *Wagner-Peyser Act* in 1933. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, the ES focused its efforts on linking out-of-work individuals with employment opportunities. At the conclusion of World War II, Congress passed the *Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944*—the G.I. Bill (58 Stat 284, June 22, 1944)—to, among many things, help troops returning from overseas find employment. It was through Title IV, particularly Sections 600 to 602, of the G.I. Bill that the scope of the ES was expanded to help returning service members obtain employment. Each state was to have a veterans' employment representative and an assistant representative (who are both federal employees) assigned within the State ES,⁷ responsible for supervising the registration of and job placement services to veterans, maintaining employer relations, promoting the interest of veterans and “assist[ing] in every possible way in improving working conditions and the advancement of employment of veterans.” Under DOL regulations, codified at 20 CFR 1001.120, veterans' priority applies to all employment services including:

- Registration,
- Interviewing with a veterans' representative,
- Testing,
- Vocational guidance,
- Referral to employment services,

⁷ These representatives were the State Veterans' Employment Representative (SVER) and Assistant Veterans' Employment Representative (AVER). These are the predecessor titles to the current Directors for Veterans' Employment and Training (DVET) and Assistant Director for Veterans' Employment and Training (ADVET) titles, respectively. It is important to note that the SVER and AVER in the past and now the DVET and ADVET are federal employees, not state employees.

- Job search workshops,
- Referral to job training,
- Referral to job openings, and
- Job development.

The role of LVERs was further defined in subsequent legislation. The *Veterans' Employment and Readjustment Act of 1972* (Title V of P.L. 92-540) amended 38 USC Section 2004 to prescribe that their “services shall be *fully* devoted to discharging the duties prescribed for the [State] veterans’ employment representative and his assistants.”(emphasis added). Public Law 100-323, the *Veterans Employment, Training, and Counseling Amendments of 1988* authorized one LVER for each local employment service office (one full-time or half-time representative depending on the number of eligible veterans in the local area).

In addition to LVERs, the federal government also funds specialists to specifically serve disabled veterans. Initially, DVOPs were funded to help disabled Vietnam-Era veterans find employment, but over time their responsibilities broadened to include outreach for all disabled veterans and veterans facing other barriers to employment. The DVOP specialists were later permanently authorized by the *Veterans' Rehabilitation and Education Amendments of 1980* (Public Law 96-466). Thus, even prior to the passage of the *Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002*, federal law required that veterans’ specialists (DVOPs and LVERs) operate in every local employment service office and that ES offices give priority to veterans over non-veterans for services.

JTPA. In addition to the *Wagner-Peyser Act*, federal job training legislation also authorizes funds for employment services and training. The *Job Training Partnership Act of 1983*, which immediately preceded WIA, included provisions to serve veterans with special employment needs. Title IV-C of JTPA mandated services to disabled, recently separated, and Vietnam-Era veterans, and in 1991, Title IV-C was extended to cover Gulf War veterans and certain members of the Guard and Reserve. Because of the close relationship between the ES and JTPA in local areas, and because of the LVER and DVOP outreach, advocacy, and service responsibilities, DVOP and LVER staff were involved with JTPA in most places.

WIA. The *Workforce Investment Act of 1998* (WIA), which replaced JTPA, continued to specify services to veterans within a broad integrated workforce development system. WIA was enacted, in part, to “consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs.” WIA requires that work-related services—including *Wagner-Peyser*, DVOP, and LVER services—be provided through One-Stop Career Centers

overseen by local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). WIA requires that all workers, job seekers, and employers be able to access a range of services through the nationwide One-Stop Career Center system. Section 168 of WIA provides for Veterans' Workforce Investment Programs for veterans with service-connected disabilities or significant barriers to employment, those who served during a war or campaign, and those recently separated from the military. State workforce agencies and local WIBs have flexibility in designing and implementing the local One-Stop system. It is within the context of WIA—universal access to employment, training, and related services through a comprehensive One-Stop system—that the *Jobs for Veterans Act* must be implemented.

Hiring Preferences. Under 38 USC 4214, veterans receive hiring preference in federal employment (and most states offer similar preference). According to a survey administered to all 50 state governments and the District of Columbia government, 46 states, as well as the federal government, grant hiring preference to veterans. Federal veterans' preference is determined as follows:

- A veteran attaining a “passing” test score will get preference over a non-veteran with a “passing” test score. For most federal jobs, “tests” are no longer given, but rather five or ten points are added to the application package for certain qualifications, experience, skills, and abilities. This helps to determine “rankings.” Certain non-disabled veterans receive five points, and all service-connected disabled veterans receive ten points. These veterans are known as “preference eligibles” and generally “float to the top” of a hiring register. Non-veterans cannot be hired before preference eligibles without justification first being provided to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM); and
- A five-point veteran and a ten-point veteran are ranked according to the “numerical score,” however, they are considered “equal” and the one with the higher numerical score does not necessarily obtain the job. Certain spouses are also eligible for the “ten point” preference.⁸ These provisions, however, do not guarantee a job and are not applicable for promotion or internal reassignment.

In addition, certain federal government contractors must provide affirmative action to certain covered veterans in hiring and promotion. Contractors must also list most job openings with the ES, and veterans will receive priority in referral to those openings.

⁸ Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. “A Guide to Veterans Preference in State Government.” In *National Veterans Employment Assistance Service*. 2002. The four states that do not grant hiring preference to veterans are: Maryland, North Dakota, Virginia, and Wyoming.

Entrepreneurship Assistance. To encourage and assist veterans interested in starting a business, the *Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999* (PL 106-50) was passed to “organize, coordinate, enhance, and expand existing business programs and services to military veterans interested in entrepreneurship.” Although this is not a Department of Labor program, it does provide employment and training opportunities for veterans and has a priority of service provision. Under the Act, the National Veterans Business Development Corporation was established to promote entrepreneurship and improve technical assistance, use public and private resources to aid veterans who want to form or expand their small business, and create and maintain job and training resource tools to be used by veterans. A variety of services are offered, including workshops and seminars on small business development. Participants pay a minimal fee to enroll, but are granted a voucher towards a computer upon completion of the program. Mentoring, networking, and technology are fully incorporated into the programs. By the end of 2003, thirty courses will be available to veterans. The Corporation’s website includes information on training and other business resources for use by veterans and the general public. Priority of service is given to disabled veterans in all Corporation programs.

What the Law Requires of DOL Affected Programs

To extend priority of service for veterans to all DOL-funded employment and training programs, the implementation of the *Jobs for Veterans Act 2002* (P.L. 107-288) requires the following of programs affected by the law:

- Program operators must provide information and priority of service to veterans (and covered spouses) regarding benefits and services that may be obtained through other entities or service providers;⁹
- Program operators must ensure that each veteran (and covered spouses) who applies to or who is assisted by a covered program is informed of the employment-related rights and benefits to which veterans are entitled to under this act;¹⁰
- The law requires government contracts in excess of \$100,000 to take affirmative action to employ qualified veterans. Contractors must list certain employment openings with the employment delivery system and may also list openings with One-Stop Centers or America’s Job Bank;¹¹

⁹ 38 USC, § 4215 (c).

¹⁰ 38 USC, § 4215 (c).

¹¹ 38 USC, § 4212(a).

- The law provides that States will be eligible to provide cash or non-financial performance incentive awards to certain employees beginning in fiscal year 2004. Outcome-based criteria for performance incentive awards are being developed by the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) and are designed to: (1) encourage improvement and modernization of employment, training, and placement services; and (2) recognize outstanding employees for providing employment services or for improvement. Eligible employees include DVOPs, LVERs, and other individuals providing employment, training, and placement services to veterans under the *Wagner-Peyser Act* and WIA;¹²
- The law requires that States must submit a plan for delivering employment, training, and job placement services for the program year that specifies DVOP and LVER duties, how DVOPs/LVERs are integrated into the employment delivery systems in the state, and the veteran population to be served;¹³
- Under the law, States will receive DVOP and LVER funds for each fiscal year in proportion to the number of veterans residing in a state that are seeking employment and the total number of veterans seeking employment in all states (under an allocation formula to be implemented in phases);¹⁴
- The law requires that, whenever possible, States are required to give preference when hiring DVOP specialists to qualified disabled veterans and when hiring LVERs, preference to qualified veterans. Non-veterans may fill these jobs if it is necessary to assure services to veterans; however, as required by Section 4102A(c)(5)(B), the Secretary of Labor must be notified of the rationale for each non-veteran employed as a DVOP or LVER for longer than six months;
- The law requires that States coordinate employment, training, and placement services for veterans and covered spouses with services provided under WIA and the *Wagner-Peyser Act*;¹⁵
- The law allows States to hire full- or half-time staff for the DVOP positions (prior law required states to hire full-time DVOPs). Prior law already permitted staff for the LVER positions to be hired as full- or half-time;¹⁶ and

¹² 38 USC, § 4112.

¹³ 38 USC, § 4102A(c)(2)(A).

¹⁴ 38 USC, § 4102A(c)(B).

¹⁵ 38 USC, § 4102A(c)(6).

¹⁶ 38 USC, § 4103(b)(1).

- The new legislation places increased emphasis on electronically-provided One-Stop Center services by requiring the Secretary of Labor to implement a virtual Job Service website with four platforms: transition and job readiness, resources, job fair and employer support, and online access to veterans' case managers. This effort will be implemented within 18 months of enactment and, while there is not an explicit requirement for states, will supplement and may link to electronically provided services of state employment agencies.¹⁷

While the above requirements of states and program operators make the new law appear prescriptive, in fact, states now have more flexibility in specifying roles and responsibilities for DVOP specialists and LVER staff.¹⁸ For example, the 2002 law removes many prior prescriptive provisions, such as detailed DVOP and LVER job descriptions. In addition, provisions of the new law remove some rules about assigning of DVOPs and LVERs to local employment offices, giving states more discretion in that regard. State DVETs also have more responsibility for designing and implementing DVOP and LVER performance standards.

¹⁷ 38 USC, § 4103(c).

¹⁸ U.S. DOL. Veterans' Program Letter No. 04-03. February 24, 2003. See also Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Testimony by Mr. Smith of New Jersey to the Committee of the Whole House of the State of the Union. May 20, 2002.

III. Current State and Local Strategies for Providing Priority of Service

Discussions with experts, in-depth interviews with local veterans' representatives, and visits to a small number of local programs revealed a wide range of current state and local strategies that are used to provide priority of service to veterans, as well as some strategies currently used in serving other populations (e.g., individuals with disabilities, migrant and seasonal farmworkers) that may be useful for providing veterans' priority of service. This chapter summarizes the results of the review and includes illustrative examples in accompanying text boxes.¹⁹ The descriptions of program activities provided in this chapter are intended as examples of how veterans receive priority of service or specialized services; they are not meant to be exhaustive.

Some workforce development experts and veterans representatives contacted feel that, prior to the passage of the *Jobs for Veterans Act*, priority of service for veterans was interpreted simply as using the publicly-funded workforce development system to hold job orders for 24 hours while DVOPs and LVERs determined whether there was a veteran qualified for the position. However, this interpretation was not universal, and there are many examples of practices that extend priority of service beyond holding job orders. Two categories of program strategies were identified:

- *Procedural Strategies.* Program administrators in state and local workforce development offices currently use several strategies to serve veterans within their regular office operations—for example, specialized staff (e.g., DVOPs and LVERs), client flow and/or job referral that provides priority of service for veterans or other targeted populations, or specialized services for veterans or other targeted populations (e.g., job fairs).
- *Electronic Web-Based and Other Self-Service Strategies.* Given the increased reliance on the Internet in recent years, there has been an explosion in web-based, self-service strategies in the publicly funded workforce development system, including both informational strategies (e.g., websites offering veteran-specific legislative, entitlement, and contact information) and job matching strategies. Many One-Stop Career Centers and local offices now routinely offer veteran-specific, self-service strategies including, but not limited to, employment and training resource rooms and access to local job listings. While resource rooms may have staff available to provide assistance upon request, these strategies are distinct from procedural strategies that *require* staff assistance.

¹⁹ Each text box has been reviewed for accuracy with a contact from that community.

Procedural Strategies

Procedural strategies that give veterans priority can be described as those involving decisions about the ways in which staff, services, and/or workforce development systems are designed and operated. We identified five types of procedural strategies for providing priority of service to veterans and other targeted groups:

- Outreach Activities,
- Intake and Registration Procedures,
- Client Flow Adaptations,
- Role of DVOPs and LVERs, and
- Integration/collaboration with other programs.

Outreach Activities

Outreach activities currently being used by state or local programs include those that target potential program participants (e.g., veterans or other special population groups) as well as those that target employers. One-Stop Center providers are encouraged to develop outreach efforts with other programs and services (e.g., publicity, advertising, brochures) to inform One-Stop Center customers of available priority services.²⁰ For example, in San Diego, outreach efforts for veterans include fact sheets and posters targeted to veterans.²¹ In Florida, outreach efforts include marketing One-Stop Center services/resources at orientation sessions. In Connecticut, state agencies have been coordinating an ongoing series of statewide Veterans' Services and Benefits fairs. Hosted at Job Centers and co-sponsored by the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs, these fairs provide health screenings and referrals, job and education assistance to veterans, as well as veterans' claim information and details concerning other federal, state, and local social services to which they may be entitled.²² Some states hold veterans-only job fairs in an effort to increase awareness and contacts among veterans and employers. Georgia hosts an annual Veterans' Job Fair where federal, state, and local employers can discuss their job openings, offering veterans and employers an opportunity to develop a

²⁰ Baran, Barbara, and Suzi Teegarden. "Setting Priorities for Service Under the Workforce Investment Act." In *Action Brief*. Washington, D.C.: AFL-CIO, Working for America Institute. April 2001.

²¹ San Diego Workforce Partnership. "Workforce Investment Act: Third-Year Local Plan Modification for San Diego City and San Diego County." San Diego, CA. 2002.

²² National Association of State Workforce Agencies. "Connecticut Holds Veterans' Services and Benefits Fair." <http://www.naswa.org/articles/template.cfm>. March 2001. Accessed April 9, 2003.

professional network circle.²³ Likewise, in Illinois, the Department of Veterans' Affairs conducts a veterans' job fair in November. All of these strategies target the general population of veterans and encourage veterans to come to the One-Stop Center or career fair for additional information and services.

In addition, more directed strategies have been developed to serve veterans with special difficulty accessing services. These efforts may be incorporated in the job responsibilities of DVOPS and LVERS, or they may be provided by other workforce development agency staff or community-based organizations. In Pennsylvania and in Rochester, New York, DVOPs and LVERs conduct outreach in prisons, speaking to incarcerated veterans about employment services and job opportunities upon release. In Durham, North Carolina, veterans' representatives visit local shelters and conduct "street outreach" to homeless veterans. Similar outreach efforts are used in New York where DVOPs/LVERs go to homeless shelters and inform veterans of the One-Stop Centers and job opportunities, but homeless veterans must go to the One-Stop Centers to receive services.

The outreach experiences from other programs suggest strategies and services that may be adapted to target veterans. One example is outreach through rapid response teams targeting individuals facing layoffs. In Georgia, the rapid response team targets a specific local area that has recently experienced widespread unemployment or where a particular population is increasing in number. For example, the rapid response team targets services to local areas with many migrant and seasonal farmworkers during the peak season to provide workers with job search information and services to assist them in finding post-seasonal employment. When a plant closes or if there are mass layoffs for other reasons, the Georgia rapid response team will target those individuals affected by providing job counseling, job search assistance, and other services. Outreach is often conducted at the plant where the layoffs will occur. Finally, the rapid response team also responds to victims of natural disasters resulting in sudden unemployment. Although the rapid response team model is designed to respond to emergency situations, a similar strategy could be used in areas with large numbers of veterans who are out of work or requiring various other services.

In some places, outreach targets employers and businesses to increase awareness of veterans' priority in seeking employment. For example, in some localities, including Durham, North Carolina and Grayslake, Illinois, veterans' representatives inform employers that job

²³ Georgia Department of Labor. "Sixty Employers Set to Attend Veterans' Job Fair in Houston County." <http://www.dol.state.ga.us/pressrel/fy03393.htm>. March 2003. Accessed April 29, 2003.

orders will be made available to veterans first and emphasize the valuable skills that veterans bring to employers. In the Grayslake, Illinois One-Stop Career Center, as part of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), veterans' representatives host three-day workshops on job-related issues such as job search, interviewing, resume preparation, and career planning. Employers that are interested in hiring veterans are brought into these workshops to discuss skill requirements and job opportunities. Many One-Stop Centers in Florida have developed marketing plans to increase the awareness among employers about job-seeking veterans and the services available at the One-Stop Centers.²⁴ The PROVET program highlighted in the text box provides another example of employer-focused outreach.

In summary, outreach efforts can be directed to employers and businesses as well as veterans and can range from printed information to special events held for veterans or employers. While most strategies ultimately require the veteran to come to the One-Stop Center, flexible and creative approaches may be needed to reach veterans who are incarcerated, homeless, residing in rural areas, or facing other barriers to accessing One-Stop Center services.

Intake and Registration Procedures

Up-front procedures at the point of entry into a One-Stop Career Center can facilitate services to veterans at the initial as well as at subsequent visits. Veteran status can be determined immediately upon entry to the One-Stop Center or via pre-registration on-line.

For in-person services, determining veteran status upon entry, as is the practice in San Diego, California and at One-Stop Centers in Florida and Georgia, enables the veteran to proceed directly to the veterans' service area to see a DVOP or LVER; it also provides access to job orders and other electronic tools specifically for veterans. At One-Stop Centers in Illinois, veterans are asked to fill out a yellow screening form developed by the State Department of Labor's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service asking about military service, public benefits, and several questions to identify whether the person may require emergency assistance or additional help, such as whether the person is homeless or has been unemployed for over six months. The DVOP/LVER on-site uses this information to help determine how best to assist each individual and to identify those who may be eligible for WIA intensive services. The information gathered from the screening form is filed quarterly.

²⁴ Florida's Agency for Workforce Innovation. "Veterans' Program Services in the One-Stop Environment." <http://www.floridajobs.org/pdg/TrainingPresentations/Vet1stop.pps>. 2002. Accessed April 16, 2003.

The Promoting Re-employment Opportunities for Veterans (PROVET) Program: Job Placement for Transitioning Service Members in a Targeted Industry

Tennessee is piloting the Promoting Re-employment Opportunities for Veterans (PROVET) program, an employer-focused job development and placement program that was specifically designed to place transitioning service members into available jobs in targeted industries. This program is a partnership between the U.S. Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans' Affairs and two state employment service offices. Each state employment service office assigns DVOPs and LVERs to network with employers in the targeted industry and solicit job opportunities. In Tennessee, the targeted industry is electronic and computer equipment maintenance—the only target industry assigned for this program. Veterans are screened during their Transition Assistance Program (TAP) session to match the specific skill needs of a given company, which gives employers access to a group of pre-screened, qualified individuals.

PROVET is funded through a staffing grant from DVOP/LVER funds.²⁵ The funding amount varies from state to state and can be received every year. In Tennessee, the program is run from two military installations (or TAP sites): Fort Campbell and the Millington Military Base. PROVET has been functioning in Tennessee since 1999 and has served more than 500 veterans.

Some states provide incentives to encourage veterans to self-register before receiving online or in-person services. For example, in Colorado, veterans who self-register receive a telephone call from someone in the One-Stop Center office the same day. Veterans who self-register with the on-line Illinois Skills Match (ISM) job matching system (see text box) receive extra assistance with ISM from the DVOP/LVER to ensure that they have used the job matching system to their greatest benefit, such as whether they have identified all their skills and full employment history. In Grayslake, Illinois, veterans' representatives send a letter every month to all the new veteran ISM registrants telling them specifically how they can improve the number of job matches; they also track disabled veterans who register with ISM in order to better provide any needed services. The ISM system also allows general tracking of veterans; for example, 666 veterans were active in the ISM system in all of Illinois in late June 2003 out of 4,220 who had registered since the system was implemented about two years ago.

²⁵ Information about PROVET funding was obtained from: (1) conversations with Jim Hubbard of the U.S. Department of Labor, and (2) a briefing sheet on PROVET obtained from Jim Hubbard.

**Illinois Skills Match Workforce Development System:
An Electronic System that can be Adapted for Veterans' Priority**

The Illinois Skills Match (ISM)²⁶ is an Internet-based job matching system available at no cost to both job seekers and employers. Implemented two years ago and upgraded and improved last summer, ISM matches Illinois-area employers with qualified job seekers.

ISM allows employers to post jobs directly (or staff at any local Illinois Employment and Training Center (ITEC) office can post the job for an employer). Employers select the skills required and/or desired for each job they post. It takes about 30-45 minutes to enter a job order initially, however, as employers become familiar with the system, it may take only about 10-15 minutes. Employers can copy, amend, and re-post job orders.

Job seekers register and enter their skills, salary requirements, and how far they are willing to travel to work. Job seekers may decide whether their personal information is confidential or available to the employer. Confidentiality is assured with social security numbers automatically suppressed and not required for registration. There are no questions pertaining to criminal history. Job seekers may also opt to suppress other information, such as part of their employment history.

The ISM system will automatically and immediately match a job seeker's skills with posted jobs. ISM then sends the job seeker and the employer an e-mail, automated telephone message, or mail indicating a match has been made. Once the information is entered, ISM will continuously update the matched list as more qualified job seekers or posted jobs enter the system. If an employer receives too many or not enough candidates, they may modify the information, resubmit the request and a new qualified list is created immediately. If a job seeker receives too many or not enough job listings, they may modify their salary requirements or travel distance or skills to obtain more or fewer matches. ISM can also inform job seekers about near matches so job seekers are aware of what skills they may lack.

Once a job seeker indicates interest in a job or an employer in a job seeker, the job seeker and employer decide how much or how little information to send to the prospective candidate and ISM sends the communication. The job candidate then either contacts the employer directly, or works with a State of Illinois Employment Service employee to facilitate contact with the employer.

While Unemployment Insurance recipients in Illinois are required to register with ISM, the system is available to any job seeker, both those currently unemployed or employed workers seeking new jobs. Both job seekers and employers may access the system from any Internet-based computer. About 30-40 percent of job seekers self-register from home or from another Internet-based computer while the remainder register at an ITEC office.

As of late June 2003, there were 666 active veterans and 4,220 total (active and inactive) veterans²⁷ in the ISM system. Employers must specify if they would like to give veterans priority in hiring, and some do. And, while there is currently no provision within the ISM system for giving veterans priority in seeing job postings first or in hiring, it would be possible to program the ISM system to automatically hold job orders for 24 hours for veterans.

Any employer entered into the ISM system is automatically entered into America's Job Bank. Non-Illinois employers can list jobs located in Illinois and job seekers seeking jobs in Illinois may search for matches while living out-of-state. Los Angeles and the State of Arkansas both purchased the rights to the ISM system from the State of Illinois. Finally, the ISM system is also a data reporting system for the state and local areas and can provide information on skills gaps between employer-demanded skills and job seekers' available skills, average wage by occupation, and many other labor market characteristics.

See www.illinoisskillsmatch.com for more information.

²⁶ Information about the Illinois Skills Match system was obtained (1) from conversations with staff during a visit to the Illinois Employment & Training Center in Grayslake, Illinois on June 27, 2003 and pamphlets received during this visit, and (2) from the <http://www.IllinoisSkillsMatch.com> website accessed in July 2003.

²⁷ A registrant remains active in the ISM system for 45 days; inactive registrants receive a letter after 45 days asking them to logon to reactivate their case.

Early and routine identification of veteran status helps improve program management and tracking of services to veterans. Having such data also allows performance measures to be developed, further reinforcing to staff the importance of determining veteran status for all customers. In Florida, the DVOPs/LVERs are required to keep track of their performance on quantitative outcome measures (e.g., number of veterans who are entering employment, retained in employment, and total participation and integration in the One-Stop Centers)—all of which require complete and thorough registration of veterans who enter the One-Stop Center. Thus, early identification of veterans can be encouraged on the part of One-Stop Center employees as well as customers, by providing incentives such as improved or additional services to veterans and performance measures that directly address this goal.

Client Flow Adaptations

The general flow of customers through a One-Stop system can sometimes be modified in ways that improve services to veterans at various points in the system, from the front desk to referrals to programs within and outside of the One-Stop Center. At all One-Stop Centers, there is a separate sign-in for veterans to see a DVOP or LVER, but some local centers have refined this process in various ways to improve service to veterans, including allowing veterans to bypass general reception or scheduling assessment times for veterans.

Subtle scheduling refinements can ensure prompt service to veterans. For example, at the Durham, North Carolina One-Stop Center, veterans' representatives stagger their lunch hours so that someone is always available to see veterans (see text box). Other local One-Stop Centers reduce or eliminate the wait-time for veterans by allocating a particular day or hours when veterans can make appointments with job counselors. These services are generally provided by a DVOP/LVER, but another worker may handle them if veterans' specialists are not available.

Bypassing the general reception area is another way to improve service access for veterans. Some One-Stop Centers use signs to direct veterans to a separate area for service, avoiding lines at the reception desk. Others use technology to streamline reception procedures. In Tennessee, every DVOP/LVER has e-mail so that veterans can e-mail them instead of visiting the One-Stop Centers. Washington, DC opened the first veterans-only One-Stop Center in the nation this spring (see text box), establishing a setting that eliminates any potential competition with other customers for access to services.

Once veterans are in the system, assessment and tracking procedures can help to manage and direct resources to those most in need. Changing the client flow of veterans within a One-Stop Center to efficiently assess who needs or does not need more than core services on the spot

is another way of assuring priority of services and managing limited resources.²⁸ In Ohio, veterans are assessed to determine the level of need, and then prioritized for service to reflect their need. Three tiers are used to determine level of need: (1) Self-Service—only need a little direction or help, such as computer training for job searching; (2) Needs Additional Help—these individuals receive job counseling, coaching, and resume revising and they are taught job search skills; (3) Veterans needing the most services are provided total case management and job development—these veterans often have extreme barriers to employment such as a disability or substance abuse. Other local programs use electronic resources or existing information systems to track (and follow up with) veterans receiving services in DOL-funded programs. For example, workforce development staff in Montana use cookies²⁹ to track veterans’ electronic activity and follow up with those veterans who may not have applied for a job.

Joblink Career Center, Durham, NC: Comprehensive Approach to Veterans’ Priority of Service

The Durham, NC One-Stop Center uses multiple approaches to assure priority of service to veterans, not only for ES programs, but for WIA training as well. Priority of service starts when a veteran walks through the door. The receptionist determines whether a new customer is a veteran and directs all veterans to sign in at the veterans’ service area, where there are three veterans’ representatives. Returning customers who are veterans know that they can bypass the receptionist and go directly to the veterans’ representatives. The self-service resource room, located at the front of the Joblink center, has 20 computer work stations—two of these are reserved for veterans—these are clearly identified by signs posted above the work stations. A veterans’ service work-study student assists veterans in the resource area from 9 am to noon Monday through Friday. This individual is bilingual (English and Spanish) and, because he is a veteran, can assist in helping veterans present their skills gained in the military on a business resume. The three veterans’ representatives stagger their lunch hours so there is always someone available to see veterans. There is a 24-hour hold on job orders for veterans and an additional 24-hour hold (for a total 48-hour hold) for disabled veterans. Even prior to passage of P.L. 107-288, the Joblink director tried to give veterans priority for WIA training, setting aside some training dollars each year for veterans. In addition to the veterans’ program staff, several other Joblink staff are veterans, helping to create a close working relationship among the One-Stop Center partners and a “veteran-friendly” environment. The Durham Joblink center served almost 2,500 veterans in program year 2002-2003.

²⁸ Baran, Barbara, and Suzi Teegarden. “Setting Priorities for Service Under the Workforce Investment Act.” In *Action Brief*. Washington, D.C.: AFL-CIO, Working for America Institute. April 2001.

²⁹ A cookie is a file created by an Internet site to store information on your computer. For example, if a veteran searches for jobs on a state website, the site might create a cookie that contains information about that search. Or it might only contain a record of the pages you looked at within the site you visited, to help the site customize the view for you the next time you visit. Cookies can also store personally identifiable information, such as your name, e-mail address, home or work address, or telephone number. However, a website only has access to the personally identifiable information that you provide. For example, a website cannot determine your e-mail name unless you provide it.

DC Networks One-Stop Career System, Veterans' Affairs Satellite, Washington, DC: A Veterans-Only One-Stop Center

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) Satellite One-Stop Career Center in Washington, DC, which opened in June 2003, is a model of a collaborative effort between the VA and a "state." The nature of the career center assures priority of service to veterans, not only in employment services but also in education and training programs. Although this center was established by the VA and not the Department of Labor, the District of Columbia Department of Employment Services considers it to be part of their One-Stop Career Center network. The One-Stop Center serves veterans from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Veterans coming to the center are served by a DVOP and an LVER (who is multi-lingual). Both are employees of the District of Columbia Department of Employment Services funded by the Department of Labor's VETS program. A veterans' representative registers first-time veterans in the Virtual One-Stop system. The satellite center includes a state-of-the art self-service computer lab and resource center including books and videotapes. There is also space in the One-Stop Center for employers to conduct interviews or make presentations on-site, as well as for job counselors to give assessment tests to veterans.

Located in adjacent offices are two employment specialists from the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, who work with disabled veterans (as well as spouses of disabled veterans) who have been approved for vocational rehabilitation and training. When these veterans are in their final 60 days of training, they are referred to the veterans' representatives for job search and employment services. Approximately 30 percent of veteran customers are referred by VA staff, while 70 percent are walk-ins. Close proximity also allows veterans' representatives and VA specialists to share information on job leads and training resources and to easily verify service information for veterans. One veterans' representative and one VA specialist coordinate a Job Club twice a month. Conveniently located in the same building are other veterans organizations, such as Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Veterans (AMVETS), and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. The veterans' representatives feel they have only just begun to explore the possibilities for collaboration and improved service delivery in this new satellite center. While a veterans-only approach has many advantages in an urban setting with a high concentration of veterans, one problem with being separately located from other WIA programs is the lack of administrative support, such as a receptionist or staff support in the resource area or computer lab.

Role of DVOPs and LVERs

As One-Stop Centers evolve, the role of specialists, such as DVOPs and LVERs, is changing in some locations, as they learn to take fuller advantage of all the services available in a One-Stop Center environment, and as One-Stop Center managers learn how to integrate veterans staff into One-Stop Center systems. DVOPs and LVERs are involved in outreach, job development, providing assistance with electronic tools, and performance monitoring, in addition to monitoring job postings and providing individual job search and case management services to veterans. The increasing reliance on electronic job search tools and self-service websites has also changed the role of the DVOPs and LVERs in recent years, allowing them to spend more time

working individually with veterans to provide services. This section presents examples of varying roles of DVOPs and LVERs that illustrate the possibilities and opportunities afforded by the One-Stop Center environment and improved technology.

In Florida, newly implemented responsibilities of the DVOP and LVER staff include active contact with employers, participation in job fairs, development of training opportunities (e.g., apprenticeship and classroom activities), vocational counseling or testing, and familiarity with computer systems and programs. In some regions of Alaska, two veterans' representatives at the local One-Stop Centers are primarily responsible for preparing veterans for federal employment through the Centralized Applicant Referral System (CARS), which is a system that refers veteran job seekers to intensive employer contact with federal hiring authorities, and includes careful, detailed oversight of the federal application process.³⁰ Other responsibilities of veterans' representatives include outreach efforts such as: (1) actively encouraging employers to hire veterans and referring job positions to qualified veterans first, and (2) routinely attending job fairs and providing information and services to veterans. In Durham, North Carolina (see text box), veterans' representatives have expanded their responsibilities in employer relations.

Joblink Career Center, Durham, NC: Expanding the Role of Veterans' Representatives

The Research Triangle area of North Carolina, served by the Durham Joblink Center, was impacted by the 2000-2001 economic slowdown. In an effort to relieve the overload on the Joblink staff, veterans' representatives took on more responsibility in the area of employer relations. While the original purpose of this change was to free up staff serving non-veterans, the change has actually worked well for improving priority of service to veterans. Veterans' representatives are able to use their meetings with employers to encourage them to hire veterans. The veterans' representatives who contact employers receive the job orders first, enabling them to assure that veterans receive priority for these jobs. There are also times when an employer will schedule a day to come to the career center to interview qualified veterans for particular job openings. Veterans' representatives also participate in job fairs and community initiatives to ensure that veterans receive priority for employment and training opportunities.

Veterans' specialists in the new veterans' One-Stop satellite in the District of Columbia are just beginning to explore the ways they can best serve veterans in this unique service delivery environment. For example, one veterans' representative and one Veterans' Administration specialist coordinate a job club twice a month. These sessions are designed to teach veterans

³⁰ Darby, Gary J. Supervisor, Anchorage Veterans' Employment Services, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, State of Alaska. From text of e-mail sent on April 21, 2003.

effective job search methods, serve as a support network for job-seeking veterans, and provide a pool of applicants for employers.

DVOP and LVER staff have learned to use electronic job search tools and have added veterans-only features to websites. The electronic Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN),³¹ provides various employment resources such as: labor market information links, links to job center locations and additional information about each of Alaska's job centers, information about job and career fairs and seminars, job postings for government and non-government jobs, and information about interview and resume writing skills. In addition to a Veterans' Services link, which leads to a description of services provided to veterans in Alaska, there are links to various programs for veterans and a link describing priority of service and who is eligible. Alaska is one of many states with similar veterans-related links on their website. For detailed descriptions of others states' websites see Appendix B.

As these examples illustrate, the proximity to other programs in the One-Stop and the availability of electronic tools will continue to offer new approaches that enable DVOPs and LVERs to improve services to veterans.

Integration/Collaboration with Other Programs

One-Stop Centers also provide an opportunity to integrate veterans' priority into all office/program services by cross-training staff or by developing or revising state or local procedures, administrative policies, or guidelines regarding service to veterans through each program. Expanding existing veterans' priority and improving referral and access to other programs are two ways that program operators can enhance services to veterans.

A number of states already offer veterans priority of service in other Department of Labor programs. In Ohio, when WIA Title I funds are limited at the One-Stop Centers, veterans get priority in pre-employment services (e.g., interviewing, resume writing, classes on business dress, etc.) and retraining to translate military experience into public and private sector work.³² At the state level, coordination with other employment programs is used to help promote the employment of veterans. For example, New Mexico works with the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)/North American Free Trade Agreement

³¹ For more about the Alaska Job Center Network see <http://www.jobs.state.ak.us/jobseeker.htm>.

³² State of Ohio Workforce Development. "State of Ohio, Workforce Investment Act, Title I/Wagner-Peyser, Five-Year Strategic Plan: July 1, 2000- June 30, 2005." 2000.

(NAFTA) programs, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program, as well the New Mexico Homeland Security and Economic Development Departments.

One-Stop Centers also allow veterans' specialists to learn more about other programs and refer veterans to other services, such as training programs, adult education classes, and social services. Co-location with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) staff at the Washington, DC veterans' One-Stop Center saves time for veterans who need to obtain service records, apply for disability, or enroll in vocational rehabilitation/training. Swords-to-Plowshares uses a collaborative model to provide comprehensive services to homeless and low-income veterans (see text box). Coordination with other One-Stop Center partners has benefits for staff development as well. When the Durham Chamber of Commerce supported a "Spanish for the Employer" training class for One-Stop Center workers, veterans' representatives attended as well, improving their ability to serve the growing Latino population in the Durham area (including veterans and their families).

In summary, there are many examples of current procedural strategies including outreach activities, registration procedures, client flow adaptations, changes in the role of DVOPs and LVERs, and integration and collaboration with other programs that provide service priority to veterans or other targeted groups. Program operators can consider these strategies when implementing veterans' priority in other programs covered by P.L. 107-288. The range of approaches, from broad information dissemination to individual assessment and service delivery and from traditional staff-directed service approaches to self-service technologically-based approaches, indicates the potential for designing customized procedures that best meet local veterans' needs, labor market conditions, and service delivery configurations.

Swords-to-Plowshares,³³ San Francisco, California: Collaborative Partnership between a Veteran Support Organization and the Local One-Stop and Several Employment and Training Partners

Founded in 1974, Swords-to-Plowshares provides employment services to homeless and low-income veterans in San Francisco, California. Swords-to-Plowshares utilizes multiple funding streams—city, county, state, and federal funds. Through a strong partnership with the local One-Stop Center, Swords-to-Plowshares offers vocational counseling, life-skills training, resume writing, and job referrals. Swords-to-Plowshares also operates a WIA Adult On-the-Job training program funded through the local Workforce Investment Board. Other collaborative partners include the Employment Development Department, and two local employment collaboratives, the San Francisco Training Partnership and the Homeless Employment Collaborative.

Swords-to-Plowshares also operates the Veterans Academy from a military base where veterans can receive computer training to enhance basic job skills and job search skills—one course being offered is on how to search the Internet for employment opportunities.³⁴

More than half of the low-income veterans served by Swords-to-Plowshares are homeless. Over 1,000 homeless veterans seek housing or employment assistance from this organization each year. About 70 percent of the customers have been out of work from six months to one year. Swords-to-Plowshares has exceeded its enrollment goal of 75 veterans for Program Year 2002-2003, reaching 78 enrollees with one quarter left in the Program Year. The job placement rate is currently 49 percent, and last year, approximately 300 veterans were placed in new jobs through these programs.

Electronic Web-Based and Other Self-Service Strategies

Service priority also operates within an interactive, self-directed, and predominantly electronic service environment. State and local workforce agencies have expanded the concept of service priority beyond the temporal dimension (i.e., veterans or other priority groups get the “first shot” at a training or service slot or job opening) to include numerous alternative strategies for self-service priority of service.

These strategies fit within two categories:

- *Informational Strategies.* Several state and local websites offer veteran-specific legislative, entitlement, and contact information that surpasses the detail and scope of information provided to other subpopulations or the general public. In addition, the

³³ Rogaski, Linda. Program and Management Division, Workforce Development Branch, California Employment Development Department. From text of e-mail sent on July 29, 2003; and Swords to Plowshares. 2003. “Steady Work and Independence: Employment & Training Unit.” <http://www.swords-to-plowshares.org/employmentservices.htm>. Accessed July 30, 2003.

³⁴ Swords to Plowshares. 2003. “From Military Base to Veterans Academy: A Model Program.” <http://www.swords-to-plowshares.org/academy.htm>. Accessed July 30, 2003.

majority of, if not all, local One-Stop Centers have non-web-based, self-service strategies including, employment and training resource rooms and access to local job listings.

- *Job Matching Strategies.* Many state job matching websites provide veterans the option of self-identifying, which allows for various priority options within the job matching system. States have implemented a two-pronged strategy to implement job matching priority in a self-service environment, highlighting veteran applicants while simultaneously encouraging veterans to self-identify.

Informational Strategies

The primary non-web-based self-service strategies offered through One-Stop Centers are resource rooms and access to local job listings. Resource rooms include hard copy information materials plus computers that include access to web-based services. In some cases, additional information about veterans' priority or other veteran-specific services is also provided. We categorize resource rooms and access to local job listings as "self-service" strategies since a veteran *could* receive services without interacting with local office staff, however, in all centers, staff are available to provide assistance to customers if necessary.

The table in Appendix B summarizes several strategies to target and inform veterans browsing state labor, workforce, or employment department websites.³⁵ This summary is derived from a self-directed Internet exploration for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In ten states, veteran-specific information was not found on the workforce development websites; these states are excluded from the table in Appendix B.³⁶ The Internet exploration represents an attempt to identify the range of alternative strategies available, that include:

Veteran Web Link. Most state labor department websites contain a direct link to "Veterans' Services" or "Veterans' Employment," and veterans are often the only subpopulation for which such a link is available. In some states (Alaska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, West Virginia, Wisconsin),³⁷ veterans can access veteran-specific information directly from prominent links on the state homepage.

³⁵ State WIB websites were also explored, but these were not found to be a relevant resource.

³⁶ The initial website exploration was conducted in May 2003. On August 6, 2003, the ten states excluded from Appendix B were rechecked for veteran-specific information; however, none was found.

³⁷ State-specific examples are illustrative, not exhaustive. It is possible that these strategies exist in other state websites but were not discovered during the website exploration. Given the importance of easy-to-access information in the self-service environment, however, this is itself a notable observation.

Legislative/Entitlement Information. Several states (e.g., California and Wyoming) have prepared detailed veteran-specific publications on rights, services, and benefits that can be viewed and printed off the state labor department website. Again, similar publications are usually not available for other subpopulations. Other states (Alaska, Illinois, Wisconsin) provide detailed information on employment-related benefits for veterans, such as veterans' priority, along with relevant excerpts from state law. Notably helpful alternative strategies include an online form to determine eligibility for priority (Montana) and an information section dedicated to employers, detailing the process and benefits of hiring veteran workers (Michigan). Finally, a few states (e.g., California, Florida) provide veterans with information on their specific entitlements under priority of service provisions.

Access to Job/Training Opportunities. The first step in providing self-service employment services to veterans is to inform veterans of the existence of job matching systems and guide them to the appropriate websites (service priority *within* state job matching systems will be discussed in a later section). Some states (Michigan, Illinois) provide prominent links on their "Veterans' Services" website pages directing veterans to state job databases, or directly to a self-registration page for the job database (Colorado) or for job training services (Florida, Pennsylvania). Other states (New York, West Virginia) provide links to private national job databases or newspaper job listings. Staff at the Durham, North Carolina JobLink Center are developing a job listing just for veterans on their website. This would be in addition to the job listings that can be accessed electronically by all customers. Some alternative strategies used for other special populations could be modified to serve veterans, such as a special job hotline available for migrant and seasonal workers (Maine) and an on-line list of all training providers available for TANF recipients (Florida).

Links to Other Services/Agencies/Publications. By including numerous links to both veteran-specific and general employment information through a "Veterans' Services" page, states provide a centralized list of tailored resources generally not available to the rest of the population. While the specific sites linked can vary by state, they can include government agencies (Colorado), veterans' associations (Oregon), on-line transition assistance (Illinois), and/or veteran-specific employment assistance (i.e., military resume writing) (Alaska).

Labor-Veterans' Affairs Interface. Veterans searching online for employment information may start at any one of many points on the Internet, including the state labor department and the state department of veterans' affairs. Usually, these two departments both contain important (but different) information on veteran services. A critical strategy for providing information to veterans is developing an interface between these two departments, so that a veteran accessing one of the departments can be guided to the information present in both.

This has been done either through linking the two sources of information (Oregon) or providing employment-related information directly on the state veterans' affairs web page as well (Pennsylvania).

Prototypical Web-Based Models

The exploration of state electronic resources, as described above, revealed that different states vary in the combination and intensity of strategies used to target, inform and serve veterans electronically. These different methods can be grouped into four prototypical web-based models:

- The *Integrated Model* combines extensive information on the state website with numerous links to external sources of information. Examples include: Alaska and California.
- The *Centralized Model* contains nearly all information on the website, with relatively few links to external sources. Examples include: New Hampshire and Oklahoma.
- The *Gateway Model* uses numerous links to gather together a rich source of varied information, while on-site content is minimal. Examples include: Colorado and Iowa (some regions).
- The *Generalized Model* requires that veterans access the same employment information and resources as the general public, with little or no veteran-specific information. Examples include: Georgia and Hawaii.

When implementing new priority of service provisions, states should consider the costs and benefits of implementing any one of these models. For instance, while a centralized model of information and services might provide more control—perhaps allowing state administrators to allow access to certain web pages or online services to priority groups only—a gateway model might be able to provide more information and resources to both priority and non-priority groups at a lower cost.

Through placement of information on the website as well as links to other useful websites and information sources, program operators can develop user-friendly electronic tools that are tailored to the information needs of veterans. While most state labor department websites have direct links for veterans, electronic access to job and training opportunities varies with respect to prominence on the website and the specific links that are provided. States as well as local One-Stop Centers continue to explore ways to improve the presentation and extent of available information.

On-Line Job Matching Strategies

To gauge veterans' priority in state job matching systems, a second Internet exploration was conducted of these systems (as well as America's Job Bank). Priorities were examined both from the registering veteran's point of view, as well as from the point of view of an employer looking for potential new hires. The following are some of the more typical on-line strategies for targeting veterans:

- Job seekers are presented early-on with a screen requesting information on veteran status. Veterans are encouraged to self-identify by being told that the information will be made available to employers searching for workers.
- The job search system flags job listings from federal contractors—who are required to implement Veterans' Affirmative Action—in order to guide veteran applicants to these listings.
- Employers searching the job matching site for potential employees will see veteran applicants flagged (in America's Job Bank, veteran applicants are literally flagged, with an American flag icon next to their name). Job applicants are listed chronologically, but each daily group of new applicants is first sorted by veteran status (i.e., disabled veterans are listed before other veterans, who are listed before non-veterans).

The Internet-based labor exchange system operates a 24-hour rule for veterans—veterans who are registered get priority of access to jobs included in the system during the first 24 hours that they are posted (e.g., California and Michigan). However, even if access to job openings on state job banks is “off-limits” to non-veterans, employers often list openings through multiple channels, and non-veterans could, of course, apply for the job through other Internet job websites.

Priority within the electronic environment is not limited to those tools also utilized by the general population; many veterans-only resources have also been developed, some that are available at resource rooms and some that are available on-line through state workforce websites. For example, Michigan and California veterans can currently use a military resume writer—aiding them in transferring more than 5,000 military occupations into civilian skills—that is being retooled for nationwide use. The Department of Defense Job Search system, which is modeled after America's Job Bank, matches exiting service members, soon-to-be veterans, with employment opportunities. The America's Job Bank Veteran Services System is a password-protected system designed for use by DVOPs and LVERs. It extracts all veteran job applicants from the America's Job Bank system, so that DVOPs and LVERs can search for resumes and contact veteran applicants proactively when it appears that a matching job exists for

them. Many other veteran-only electronic employment resources exist, and veterans can access them through the CareerOneStop website (the parent site of America's Job Bank).

In addition, some states have pursued more informal options to increase veterans' priority in job matching systems. One-Stop Center staff may provide veteran job applicants with more extensive assistance in entering resumes or other information into the job matching database (e.g., suggesting they use certain "key words" to trigger more viewings by potential employers). This intervention and assistance reduces the extent to which such systems are truly models of self-service, but shows the flexibility with which different resources can be combined to implement priority of service in an electronic environment.

Our review of state and local procedural and electronic strategies offers a number of promising approaches that can be expanded to provide priority of service to veterans in all applicable DOL programs. The One-Stop Center environment and the increased use of electronic tools offer opportunities to tailor information and services to veterans, improve access to both on-site and remote services, implement changes in the roles of DVOPs and LVERs as well as other One-Stop Center staff, and collaborate across programs to provide each veteran with services that meet their individual needs.

IV. Conclusions and Options for Implementing New Priority of Service Provisions

The *Jobs for Veterans Act* gives states and localities much latitude in implementing priority of service for veterans in DOL-funded programs. This approach is consistent with the flexibility afforded by WIA in allowing local workforce development boards and One-Stop Centers to determine how best to meet the employment and training needs of veterans. Current practices for serving veterans under the *Wagner-Peyser Act* demonstrate that compliance with priority of service can be successfully achieved in various ways, and that these practices are often shaped by local circumstances. States and localities differ in their organizational environments, workforce development resources, state regulations concerning priority of service to veterans, the number of veterans residing in their service area, and labor market conditions. Discussions with experts and on-site interviews and observations, lead to the conclusion that providing improved service to all One-Stop Center customers is compatible with, and complements, quality service to veterans.

Local Workforce Investment Boards and One-Stop Center managers should review their current services to veterans and the most recent guidance from DOL³⁸ and determine whether any changes are necessary in their local provision of services to implement priority of service for veterans in accordance with the new legislation. It is possible that in many centers, veterans are already being well-served, and only minor changes might be needed, such as modifying registration forms to document all veterans registered and the services they receive. For all programs, veterans must first meet the program's eligibility provision—veterans' priority is not intended to displace the core mission of any particular program. If veteran status is not already being recorded in the management information system, that could be easily incorporated in most cases. Once such veterans' determinations have been made, the following strategies, alone or in combination, offer many approaches for implementing veterans' priority of service within program parameters.

³⁸ As of this writing, Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 5-03, September 16, 2003.

In some centers, more changes might be appropriate to ensure priority of service to veterans. We suggest three approaches that program administrators may want to consider when implementing the new priority of service provisions, and the types of technical assistance that might be most useful:

1. Establish *priority of service goals* when serving veterans;
2. Consider *procedural changes* in local One-Stop Center offices to expand services to veterans; and
3. Improve *self-service resources and electronic strategies*.

Establish Priority of Service Goals

Performance measurement and goal-setting can help to clarify the intent of priority of service and serve as a motivating force for all One-Stop Center staff. State and local administrators may set performance goals to determine how many and/or how well veterans are being served by particular programs, and the One-Stop Center system overall. Possible goals include both those already included in workforce development programs and newly developed goals that are veteran-specific. In addition, goals pertaining to DVOP and LVER performance, such as the Veterans' Entered Employment Rate (VEER) and the Veterans' Employment Retention Rate (VERR), can be adapted to the broader range of DOL programs. Some states have found that establishing goals that compare veterans to non-veterans (e.g., expecting local offices to achieve a higher job placement for veterans than that achieved for non-veterans) is effective in encouraging priority of service and in monitoring service.

Extending veterans' service measures (albeit with somewhat different target numbers) to non-veteran and non-*Wagner-Peyser* staff could increase awareness of veterans' priority of service in DOL programs and is one way to encourage all staff to: include veteran status as an inquiry for all customers, document veteran status in all programs, and coordinate with veterans' representatives and other staff of veterans' employment programs or services to assure that appropriate referrals are made.

Program operators will need to carefully consider how they apply priority of service beyond specialized DVOP and LVER staff, since priority of service may mean different things in different programs. For example, while ES, DVOP, and LVER staff may typically establish priority of service by placing a 24-hour hold on a job order, priority of service for a training program may be defined differently, depending more on the enrollment period or non-veteran

characteristics of individuals, and may vary in a community because of different procedures established by each training provider. Within the guidelines set out by DOL,³⁹ local administrators may wish to clarify the definition they want to make operational, or allow staff and operators discretion in establishing their own definitions. In either case, the policies should be documented.

WIA administrators may also develop selected “process” measures to ensure that priority of service is being implemented as intended. Measures such as wait times for veterans, referrals between programs, availability of staff assistance in the self-service area, and accessibility of resources to disabled veterans may provide useful information to include in performance agreements and should help improve services.

Technical assistance should focus on clarification of DOL/ETA guidance as it develops, performance measurement theory and practice, and meetings that bring together staff from different programs to discuss definitions and goals for priority of service.

Consider Local Office Procedural Modifications

Procedural modifications, as demonstrated by some of the examples in Section III, can be uniquely tailored to local operations. Options for procedural changes that would improve priority of service to veterans include but are not limited to:

- Increased interprogram/interagency collaboration,
- Changes in registration and/or assessment procedures,
- Modifications to data collection and reporting systems, and
- Physical changes at the One-Stop Center.

One-Stop Career Centers are exploring various ways to better coordinate with co-located partner programs. Some centers have One-Stop Center management teams that address improvements in client flow, information sharing, and service integration. DVOPs and LVERs serving on such teams can act as advocates in implementation of priority of service under the WIA system. They can inform staff from other programs about the priority of service provisions and about the many services available to veterans. It is important that the veterans’ program staff

³⁹ DOL will be issuing guidance separately for each affected ETA program.

approach coordination both as a way to promote veterans and also as a way to improve service for all customers. For example, increased knowledge of the services available to veterans can assist staff of other programs in making appropriate referrals, resulting in better outcomes for the veterans and possibly freeing up time for serving non-veterans. Through job development and networking activities with veterans' organizations and employers, veterans' representatives also have access to contacts and job openings that may not be electronically advertised. Sharing this information with other One-Stop Center staff (observing existing priority/job-hold procedures) can be a valuable service to the One-Stop Center. Veterans' representatives and other One-Stop Center partners can collaborate in other areas as well, such as addressing training needs identified by employers, organizing job clubs, or improving overall client flow or delegation of administrative tasks at the One-Stop Center. Some of these activities may indirectly focus on veterans' priority of service by improving staff and program collaboration and modifying center operations to facilitate implementation of the new priority of service provisions.

A number of state veterans' program officials contacted for this study emphasized the need to focus on individual veterans, indicating that the most important outcome of priority of service is to ensure that each veteran seen obtains the services and benefits to which he or she is entitled, and receives services that address individual needs. Procedural changes in the registration and/or assessment process may help in this regard. Staff providing assessment and/or case management for veterans need to be knowledgeable about all DOL-funded programs. When veterans' representatives assess a new applicant, they need to consider all of the resources on which an applicant can draw and determine the best program or programs for that individual. In addition, the veterans' representative needs to understand how priority of service is implemented in each program so that appropriate procedures can be followed. Conversely, other staff at the One-Stop Center or at other local programs need to understand that veterans will receive priority of service, and, should they be working with an individual who is a veteran, be aware of the range of other services available to veterans. Comprehensive assessment procedures, sharing assessment results, written flow charts and program information, as well as cross-training of staff can help to promote individualized service plans that consider the full range of program options.

Program directors may want to examine their current data collection and reporting systems to determine if they already have the structures in place to collect veterans' performance information. The *Jobs for Veterans Act* requires that the Secretary of Labor develop an annual report to Congress (beginning in PY 2003) on whether veterans are receiving priority of services, whether they are being fully served by programs and grants covered by the legislation, and whether the representation of veterans in such programs is in proportion to the incidence of

veterans in the labor market. To fulfill this requirement, program operators will need to collect veteran status information from individuals served by their programs or grants.⁴⁰ Local agencies or One-Stop Centers may also want to document and track referrals between programs. In some cases, current data systems may only require small modifications to collect performance indicators for veterans served. Where more extensive changes may be indicated, it is important that changes are compatible with other WIA performance reporting requirements and that sufficient time is allowed for implementing changes in reporting requirements. ETA is in the process of revising its data collection systems to develop a more standardized approach across workforce programs, and program operators should keep abreast of these developments.⁴¹

Physical changes may be as basic as improving signage in the One-Stop Center, directing veterans to the veterans' service area and allowing them to bypass the main reception desk, or informing veterans that they will receive priority of service for a wide range of programs. There is no one "right way" to inform or direct customers. For example, rather than bypass the reception desk, prominent signs at the entrance to the One-Stop Center may instead encourage customers to register first so that veterans' status is determined and documented as soon as possible. Other uses of signage include "reserving" computer workstations for veterans, and posting notices about veterans' rights and priority of service in areas of the career center beyond the veterans' service area.

Program operators would benefit from technical assistance that shares best practices. There is a growing body of research literature on program collaboration and One-Stop Centers, including case studies, that could form the basis of technical assistance meetings, conference calls, or webcasts. In addition, on-site consulting related to client flow and staff training would be useful to programs as they implement priority of service.

Improve Self-Service Resources and Electronic Strategies

Since priority of service to veterans has been a requirement for the Employment Service, self-service resources and electronic strategies have already been adapted to serve veterans (see Appendix B). But, program operators are continually improving these features, and changes will

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Labor. "Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 5-03." September 16, 2003.

⁴¹ ETA will introduce the revised data collection system through publication of a *Federal Register* notice.

need to be made to reflect the broader priority of service requirements of the *Jobs for Veterans Act*. Information about veterans' priority can be featured prominently on websites and posted in resource rooms. A number of state websites hold job orders for veterans, bring veterans to the top of the applicant list, and/or "flag" job applications from veterans. State workforce development websites can also be redesigned to improve access by and information for veterans. Strategies include additional links to other programs that provide priority of service to veterans, "veterans-only" job listings, and online e-mail links to veterans' representatives.

Self-service systems can be modified to obtain and store information on veterans' status and encourage registration by veterans. Identifying veterans' status for all registrants or customers who use a state's web-based Internet site and providing this information to local veterans' representatives for follow-up may help ensure and monitor implementation of priority of service. Other self-service resources can be expanded to better meet the needs of veterans. For example, resource rooms can provide suggested key words for online searches as well as print or electronic "crosswalks" that match military job classifications with common civilian job titles and job qualifications. Based on the review of state websites, the following criteria may be useful in evaluating websites and identifying areas for improvement:

- Visibility of Information—Are veterans' services/priority of service mentioned on the home page? Are there obvious links?
- Types of Information—e.g., applicable legislation, job opportunities, training opportunities, other services,
- Active as well as passive features—Can the user e-mail for on-line assistance? Is an electronic response provided? Is a toll-free number posted on the website?
- Evaluation Component—Is there a user satisfaction survey on the site? Are user comments or suggestions solicited?

In addition, analysis of website statistics such as number of users or "hits" per month, time spent at the site or at a particular page, search topics being used, and where possible, user characteristics, will assist program operators in evaluating and improving their electronic tools.⁴² Technical assistance should inform program operators and staff about the various electronic options that are available, the advantages and disadvantages of each, as well as the costs and ease of implementation. Training on the specific technologies selected and on monitoring and

⁴² Katherine Lotspeich and Michael Fix. "Assessment of the Department of Labor's Compliance Assistance Resources." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2003.

evaluating the use of the technology will enable program operators and staff to use electronic tools to their full potential.

In summary, implementing priority of service as required under the *Jobs for Veterans Act* will evolve with the WIA One-Stop Career system. Implementation of veterans' priority of service is in its early stages. This report presented promising practices for serving veterans that have already been implemented in ES programs, as well as lessons learned from programs serving other special populations. This information, along with additional guidance and technical assistance from DOL/ETA, will assist One-Stop Center partners as they continue to work together to ensure priority of service to veterans and improve services to all One-Stop Center customers.

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Appendix A
Programs Covered by the 38 U.S.C. 4215 Veterans' Priority of Service

Programs administered by ETA:

- (1) Public Labor Exchange/*Wagner-Peyser* Program authorized by the *Wagner-Peyser* Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.);
- (2) Trade Act Program authorized under title II, Chapter 2 of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.), as amended by the Trade Adjustment Assistance Reform Act of 2002, Pub. L. 107-210;
- (3) WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs authorized by title I of WIA (29 U.S.C. 2801 et seq.);
- (4) National Emergency Grants authorized by section 173 of WIA (29 U.S.C. 2918);
- (5) Native American programs authorized by section 166 of WIA;
- (6) Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Programs authorized by section 167 of WIA;
- (7) Job Corps authorized by subtitle C of WIA;
- (8) Youth Opportunity Grants authorized under WIA section 169;
- (9) WIA demonstration projects authorized under WIA section 171, including Faith-based Initiative Grants and Offender Reentry Initiative Grant (Serious and Violent Offenders and Young Offenders);
- (10) H-1B Technical Skills Training Grants authorized under the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998 (Pub. L. 105-277, div. C, title IV, sec. 414(c)), as amended by the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-First Century Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-313, title I, sec. 111), codified as a WIA demonstration program at 29 U.S.C. 2916a;
- (11) Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) authorized by title V of the Older Americans Act;
- (12) Welfare-to-Work authorized by section 403(a)(5) of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 603(a)(5));

- (13) ETA's Electronic Workforce Tools, such as CareerOneStop which includes Career Infonet, America's Job Bank, and America's Service Locator; America's Literacy Directory; Federal Learning Exchange; American Labor Market Information System (ALMIS); Federal Labor Wage Library; Job Corps' Career Development; O*NET database and career assessment tools; Advanced Learning Technology Resource Center; Job Accommodation Network; Searchable Online Accommodation Resource.

Programs administered by VETS:

- (14) Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Program authorized by 38 U.S.C. 4104A, as amended by H.R. 4015 (new section 38 U.S.C. 4103A);
- (15) Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project (HVRP) authorized by 38 U.S.C. 2021;
- (16) Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) authorized by 10 U.S.C. 1144;
- (17) Veterans' Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) authorized by section 168 of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA);
- (18) *Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) authorized by 38 U.S.C. 4103A, as amended by H.R. 4015 (new section 38 U.S.C. 4103A).

Programs administered by others:

- (19) The Women's Bureau's Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) program authorized by the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations Act of 1992, (29 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.) program;
- (20) Office of Disability Employment Programs (ODEP) pilot and demonstration grants.

* Possible application.

Appendix B⁴³
Informational Strategies for Veterans in a Self-Service Environment

State	State Workforce Department Website Design	Legislative/Entitlement Information	Access to Job/Training Opportunities	Links to Other Services/Agencies/Publications	Employment Information on State Veterans' Affairs Website	Additional Comments
Alaska	Link to Veteran Employment Services on Labor Department Homepage	Simple explanation of veterans' preference; benefit timetable and contacts; lists job services including priority referral	Link to Alaska Job Network; Job Center contact info to get priority job referrals, resume assistance, and assessments	Links to VSOs, federal agencies, and other state services such as training providers	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference; link to One-Stops and state Employment Service	Very thorough, with some resources unique among state vet employment sites
Arkansas	Link to Veterans from Employment Security Homepage	DVOP and LVER overview and contact info	Job information hotlines; state job openings; links to other Job Banks and VSOs	Comprehensive list of services and agencies available to veterans	None	Good, although the list of benefits and services is not comprehensive.
California	Link from Employment Development Dept. Homepage	Discussion of priority of services; very thorough publication on all services available to veterans	Link to online state labor exchange system	Federal government, Job Service and One-Stops	Directory of vet services, including job services	Provides many links and much on-site information
Colorado	Link to Veterans off of "Worker Info" on Labor Dept. Homepage	Links to state and federal info on all benefits	Self-registration for Colorado Workforce databases; other online job search	Dozens of links to government, VSOs, general employment and vet information, forms, One-Stops	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference	An excellent example of what links to provide on a Veterans' employment website
Connecticut	Veterans link on the Labor Dept. Homepage	List of state vet benefits with timetable; link to federal Veterans Info Guide	Links to Job Centers, Job Bank, Job Fairs and Workshops, State and Federal Job Openings	Dozens of links to VSOs, employment data, government and contact info, health sites	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference	An excellent example of what links to provide on a Veterans' employment website
District of Columbia	Link to Veterans Information on the Dept. of Employment Services Homepage	Overview of One-Stop Centers and contact information	Links to national and D.C. job databases, but not tailored for veterans	Links to government and general employment information, and the One-Stop Centers, including the veterans-only satellite career center	Description of mission, along with contact information; explanation of Veterans' Preference on the Office of Personnel website	Small, but provides necessary contact information
Florida	Need to locate AWI Programs within Job Seeker menu	Simple explanation of benefits; DVOP and LVER overview; Vet legislation and ETA documents	One link to a vet employment site for construction work	State and federal government links; links to performance reports and workforce best practices	Benefit Guide; link to state job openings, online application, job guide, and workforce department	One of few states that links to publications

⁴³ The information gathered for this table is accurate as of May 2003. As of May 2003 and reconfirmed on August 6, 2003, 10 states (Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, Rhode Island) are excluded from the table because veteran-specific information was not found on the state's home website or state's Labor Department website.

Appendix B (continued)
Informational Strategies for Veterans in a Self-Service Environment

State	State Workforce Development Website Design	Legislative/Entitlement Information	Access to Job/Training Opportunities	Links to Other Services/Agencies/Publications	Employment Information on State Veterans' Affairs Website	Additional Comments
Hawaii	State Workforce Dev. Division links to VETS Resource Connection	Linked to overview of benefits through the VETS Resource Connection	Links to national & state job databases, but not tailored for veterans.	Many links to federal agencies (including VETS) and VSOs	Mention of Veterans' Preference	All veterans' information, while linked to the state webpage, is external
Idaho	Veterans' Services link on labor department homepage	Links to state and federal preference information; detailed eligibility information	Links to job referral, job search assistance, Job Service contacts, but not tailored for veterans.	Federal and state agencies and guides; VSOs	Veterans' Preference information and forms; link to state job openings	Good information, although lacking an overview of benefits
Illinois	Veterans' link from "Individuals" link on state employment security website	Some information on preference and other financial and employment benefits	Connection to the Illinois skills matching system; link to One-Stop info	Links to online transition assistance	Mention of Veterans' Preference & services offered by Employment Security Department	Small and centralized, and very employment-focused
Indiana	Link to Veterans' Programs from the Workforce Development Department Homepage	List of One-Stop Center services; explanation of orders of priority of service for different types of veterans	Generalized job search services available elsewhere on the site	None within the Veterans' site	Mention of Veterans' Preference; explanation of DVOPs and LVERs; One-Stop contacts; good employment links	Very little veteran-specific information
Iowa	Veterans' services information is only available through regional pages	Some localities mention Veterans' Preference	Links to veteran-specific websites offering job search, resume writing	Some good federal links, local contacts, and VSOs; but only on some regional pages	DVOP, LVER, VETS and One-Stop contact info; list of employment services offered	Varies by locality
Kansas	Link to Veterans' Employment from Employment Homepage	Detailed DVOP and LVER information only	Link to state Job Link system; DVOP and LVER contact information	Few links, to federal & local veterans' agencies	Link to state job openings	Provides basic level of service information and links
Kentucky	Link to Veterans from Employment Service Department Homepage	Short summary of the Department's veterans' service	Generalized job search services available elsewhere on the site	Link to VETS only	Benefits publication with preference information	Very small site; basically a gateway to the federal VETS site
Louisiana	Vet Info accessible through "Job Seekers" tab on labor homepage	Little on-site information	Generalized job search services available elsewhere on the site	A few non-employment related federal links; a career information link	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference	Minimal Veteran-specific information
Maryland	Veterans' Info found under Employment & Training/Job Service	Mention of service priority; detail on license and certification only	Link to state CareerNet	Link to One-Stops and a few federal agencies	Links to VETS, state vet labor services, federal preference info	Small, but provides necessary contact information
Massachusetts	Information found under "Worker's Services" within Employment & Training Department	DVOP and LVER overview only	Link to state Job Bank; contact information for One-Stops	A few state and federal government links	Explanation of Veterans' Preference; list of job services; link to state Employment Department	Small, but provides necessary contact information

Appendix B (continued)
Informational Strategies for Veterans in a Self-Service Environment

State	State Workforce Development Website Design	Legislative/Entitlement Information	Access to Job/Training Opportunities	Links to Other Services/Agencies/Publications	Employment Information on State Veterans' Affairs Website	Additional Comments
Michigan	Vet link on Career Dev. Page; prominent phone number for complaints and/or questions	Veterans' "bill of rights"; list of vet reps by county	Prominent links to state and federal job openings; info for employers on how to hire veterans	Many other veteran-related links and services	None	Very many useful links and on-site information
Minnesota	On the state workforce homepage under "Job Seeker Services"	Short list of all Veterans' employment services and qualifications	Link to VetJobs and Veterans' Job Bank; detailed statewide contact info	VSOs, federal and state agencies, other veteran employment websites	Very detailed preference FAQ; links to Job Bank, state job openings	Interesting links, overall small but good
Missouri	Vet employment within workforce development website, under Job Seekers/Employment	Short list of Vet services; more detail on training within education department website	Generalized job search services available elsewhere on the site	A few federal links (including VETS) and military links	Short explanation of state preference and priority	Contains few links but even fewer pieces of centralized information
Montana	None	None	Veterans' Employment Preference Form online to determine eligibility	Link to MT Vet Affairs and US VETS	Mention of Veterans' Preference	Online publications make things one step closer for user to finish process
New Hampshire	From state website: If you click "Working" there is a link to veterans' programs	Short overview of all benefits	Online Veterans' Resource Guide, mainly just contact info (see links) but a good idea	Few electronic links, but many addresses and phone numbers for other services	Short explanation of Vet Preference in certain state offices; qualified veterans are granted training priority	Online Veterans' Guide should include more details on job process; website is navigable
New Mexico	From state website: Link to NM Veterans' Service Commission	Plain-English explanation of programs and services	Contact information for regional office is available	Online Annual Report, but no mention of veterans' preference or priority	None	Website is navigable; much of the information for veterans is very general.
New York	From state DOL website: Link to Employment & Training/ Veterans' Services	Plain-English explanation of training program, benefits, job services, etc.	Links to national & state job databases targeted to the general public	Links to various state & local agencies for both job seekers & employers	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference in state/local/fed government; vet priority in state DOL offices	Good descriptions of vet services, benefits, preference, etc.
North Carolina	From NC Employment Commission website: Link to Veterans	Simple explanation of services provided by DVOP/LVER staff	Links to national & state job databases targeted to the general public	Links to federal agencies & One-Stop Centers.	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference in state government	Very little veteran-specific information
North Dakota	From ND Veterans' Employment & Training website: Links to Benefits, Programs (TAP), and Contacts	Simple explanation of federal & state veterans' preference	Links to national & state job databases targeted to the general public; contact information are available for DVOP/LVER staff	Links to federal & state veterans' agencies	Mention of Veterans' Preference in public employment	Website is navigable

Appendix B (continued)
Informational Strategies for Veterans in a Self-Service Environment

State	State Workforce Development Website Design	Legislative/Entitlement Information	Access to Job/Training Opportunities	Links to Other Services/Agencies/Publications	Employment Information on State Veterans' Affairs Website	Additional Comments
Ohio	From OH Bureau Veterans' Services: Links to vet job services (TAP, etc.)	Simple explanation of Veterans' Bill of Rights which mention vet priority in job referrals/training & vet preference in state government	Links to numerous job databases including those in Ohio Natl Guard; contact information are available for DVOP/LVER staff	Links to various state & local agencies for both job seekers & employers	Link to Veterans' Benefits Manual which mention vet preference in state government	Numerous & relevant links which have meaningful content
Oklahoma	From OK Veterans' Services website	Brief descriptions of veterans' services (TAP, etc.)	Contact information for DVOP/LVER staff are available by locality	Links to various state & local agencies for both job seekers & employers	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference; explanation of jobs available for veterans	Good descriptions of vet services, benefits, preference, etc.
Oregon	From OR Employment Dept website	Brief descriptions of veterans' programs & benefits	Job listings available from DVOP/LVER staff, contact information available	Links to other services/agencies are hard to find	Link to state legislation which gives short explanation of Veterans' Preference on civil service exams	Good information, but links to external sources should be more easily accessible
Pennsylvania	From state labor dept. website	General description of vet services only	Available on Career Link website	Links to other services/agencies are hard to find	Link to One-Stop Vet Services; explanation of vet priority in job referrals; online request for job referrals available	Very little veteran-specific information
South Carolina	From SC Employment Security Commission website: Link to Veteran Services	None	Mention of federal and state jobs where veterans have preference; contact information available to ask about these jobs	Online job registration is available through the electronic One-Stop Center service	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference in public sector	Online job registration makes things one step closer to self-service
South Dakota	From SD Dept of Labor website: Link to Veteran Services	Simple description of Veterans' Preference in public employment	Contact information available for DVOP/LVER staff; locator of One-Stop Centers	Links to federal & state veterans' agencies	Contact info on vet centers; links to job database for Army Natl Guard & Air Natl Guard	Pertinent information on website; website is navigable
Tennessee	Link to Vet Program from employment dept. website	None	Links to national & state job databases; contact information available for One-Stop Center staff by county	Links to federal agencies & One-Stop Centers	Link to Online Services which links to state & teaching job database	No mention of veterans' preference or priority. Could be adapted more to veteran users.

Appendix B (continued)
Informational Strategies for Veterans in a Self-Service Environment

State	State Workforce Development Website Design	Legislative/Entitlement Information	Access to Job/Training Opportunities	Links to Other Services/Agencies/Publications	Employment Information on State Veterans' Affairs Website	Additional Comments
Texas	From TX Veterans' Employment & Training website: Link to TX Veterans' Commission which briefly explains Veterans' Preference in state employment	Simple explanation of DVOP/LVER staff responsibilities which includes mention of vet priority of service and reference to Title 38 USC	Link to TX Veterans' Commission which links to TX Veterans Online: state & federal jobs database available for veterans	Many links to external resources	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference in state government	A great resource, along with the TX Workforce Commission. These external resources have an array of information on services, benefits, downloadable forms, etc.
Utah	From UT Dept of Workforce Services website: Link to Veterans' Services	None	Links to local newspaper classified jobs; contact info for DVOP/LVER staff	Links to federal & state veterans' agencies	Explanation of federal and state preference; Federal Benefits Manual detailing vet benefits	Good information, although lacking an overview of benefits
Vermont	From VT Dept of Employment & Training website: Link to Veterans' Preference	Detailed explanation of Veterans' Preference in federal & state employment	Link to Job Bank targeted to the general public; contact information available for DVOP/LVER staff	Links to federal & state veterans' agencies	Link to Employment & Training which explains Veterans' Preference for federal & state jobs	Provides many links and much on-site information
Virginia	From VA Employment Commission website: Links to Job Seeker Services & Vet Services	None	Contact information for Commission field offices are available by town	Links to federal veterans' agencies	Link to VA Employment Commission which links to contact info for DVOP/LVER staff	Good information and necessary contact information is available, but lacking on summary of benefits
Washington	From WA Worksource website: Link to Veterans	Extensive information on veterans' services, policy background & legislation	Contact information for WA Worksource is available	Links to federal & state veterans' agencies	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference in public employment	Links are information & guidance only
West Virginia	From WV Bureau of Employment Programs: Link to Employment of Military Veterans	Simple explanation of veterans' programs, Veterans' Priority in employment & training services	Links to national, state, & local job databases; contact information is available for federal veterans' representatives	Online job service application available	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference in competitive exams	Online job service application is a good idea
Wisconsin	From WI Dept of Workforce Development: Link to Veterans' Services	Simple explanation of Veterans' Preference in federal employment	Link to federal jobs database	Federal, state, & local veterans' agencies; Vet Guide available detailing services; federal job forms also available online	Short explanation of Veterans' Preference in federal & state employment	Online forms and Vet Guide are very helpful.
Wyoming	From WI Dept of Workforce Services: Link to Veterans	Simple explanation of veterans' services including steps to finding a job	Link to WY Job Network; contact information available for One-Stop Center	Links to federal & state veterans' agencies	Link to Benefits Manual which explains public sector vet preference.	Links are information & guidance only