



For Immediate Release

John Jordan
Principor Communications
(202) 595-9008 x63

Workplace Warriors at Risk: DMEC Reports Employers Still Unprepared to Help Integrate Veterans

Case Studies on Successful Initiatives

SAN DIEGO, CA--(Nov 5, 2012) - The past ten years has seen the largest deployment of citizen soldiers since World War II. Given the prevalence of disability in the veteran population -- about 25% for physical disabilities and nearly 20% for behavioral health conditions such as major depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) -- employer education and preparedness to address the needs of this population are essential. Yet, despite good intentions, few are fully prepared.

That was the conclusion of the Disability Management Employer Coalition's (DMEC) 2007 white paper, *Workplace Warriors: The Corporate Response to Deployment and Reintegration -- Highlighting Best Practices in Human Resources and Disability Management*. With the withdrawal of the last U.S. combat troops from Iraq in December 2011, and a decision by the U.S. and its NATO allies to end combat operations in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, DMEC recently decided to revisit the issue. Its Workplace Warriors Think Tank brought together disability management, human resources and military experts to conduct a comprehensive examination of the state of veteran employment trends and employer efforts to foster successful reintegration into the civilian workplace.

The result of this effort, the just released *Workplace Warriors Revisited: Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned from Deployment and Reintegration of Citizen Soldiers*, examines the gains made since 2007. While effective programs have been put in place, the white paper reaches the same conclusion as that of five years ago: Few employers are fully prepared to provide job opportunities for civilian soldiers and full-time military who return to face an uncertain economic climate and a tight labor market for all workers.

While the overall situation clearly requires immediate and sustained attention by employers and policy makers, *Workplace Warriors Revisited* provides case studies of employers that have successfully provided job opportunities, appropriate workplace assistance and other support to Reservists and other veterans. The strategies and programs put in place as identified in *Workplace Warriors Revisited* and the 2007 white paper:

- Requiring "cultural sensitivity" training for human resources, EAP, and other professionals of the issues and challenges that face veterans, as well as the unique strengths within this population

- Participating in job fairs and other hiring initiatives for veterans
- Championing the establishment of employee resource groups for veterans in the workplace
- Amending existing workforce management policies to ensure veterans have the necessary schedule flexibility to access medical, counseling, and rehabilitation services from the VA or other providers
- Establishing a Military Leave and Return Policy
- Conducting performance appraisals pre-deployment to establish a baseline for the returning employee and his or her manager
- Maintaining contact with the employee and family during deployment, and offering support to employees whose family members or other loved ones have been deployed
- Offering sensitivity training to managers, supervisors, and co-workers on issues and challenges faced by citizen soldiers during deployment and post-deployment
- Providing mentoring programs that link returning citizen soldiers with veterans in the workforce
- Evaluating Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) for their ability to identify and address PTSD and other behavioral health-related issues

"There are best practices in disability management that can be applied to the veteran population, to help reintegrate civilian soldiers and to recruit and retain full-time military who are now joining the civilian workforce," said Marcia Carruthers, President and CEO of DMEC. "These veterans have valuable skills and experience, including advanced training and leadership abilities. Providing opportunities for them is simply the right thing to do. It is past time that we as a nation get this done."

DMEC members can download *Workplace Warriors Revisited: Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned from Deployment and Reintegration of Citizen Soldiers* from www.dmec.org. All others can purchase the full white paper at <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/dmec2009>.

About DMEC

2012 marks the 20th anniversary of the Disability Management Employer Coalition (DMEC), a non-profit organization that advances strategies and resources to improve workforce productivity. The association was established in San Diego, California in 1992 and has expanded to include chapters across the country, as well as an annual international conference. The primary goal of DMEC is to assist employers in developing cost-saving programs and returning employees to productive employment. Visit www.dmec.org for more information about educational publications and events.