

**Congressional Briefing:
The Science of Recruiting, Hiring, and Training Veterans for the Civilian Workforce
Wednesday, August 6, 2014**

The purpose of *The Science of Recruiting, Hiring, and Training Veterans for the Civilian Workforce* is to share specialized industrial and organizational (I-O) psychology research and capabilities applied to create effective, impactful veterans workforce programs and policies. For over 100 years, through the application of rigorous scientific methodology, the field of I-O psychology has studied the psychological side of work with the expressed goal of improving employment experiences, including satisfaction and productivity for workers and organizations.

The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates nearly 200,000 service men and women transition out of the military each year, and the trend is expected to continue for the next four years. Congressional and federal policy makers routinely grapple with how to appropriately support the employment and workforce needs of the growing veteran population, as the nation, as a whole, struggles with unemployment and underemployment. Programs through the Department of Defense, individual service branches, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, in addition to those created by nonprofit and private-sector organizations, seek to offer resources to veterans to facilitate their transition into the civilian workforce and translate their military skills into civilian practice.

I-O psychologists conduct impactful, applied research that provides a scientific foundation for many challenges faced by our nation in transitioning veterans to civilian work. For example:

- **Challenge:** Civilian employers struggle to translate skills and experience gained in the military to their open positions, since military occupations often have titles that are not directly comparable to those common in the civilian workforce.
I-O Impact: I-O psychology offers expertise on how jobs can be compared; applied methodology for linking tasks, skills, and jobs; and provision of a common technical language for discussing similarities-differences between military and civilian jobs.
- **Challenge:** Veterans often experience difficulty transitioning to civilian work because the knowledge and skills they developed in the military are not always immediately transferable to civilian jobs.
I-O Impact: I-O psychologists have developed scientific means of classifying personnel based on skills, interests, and other characteristics; designed and evaluated training interventions; and offer evidenced-based insight on how best to close gaps (e.g., via training vs. recruiting and hiring) based on the type of gap faced.
- **Challenge:** Veterans face challenges understanding how to gain employment in the civilian workforce. Compared to the evidence-based selection, training, and placement systems in the military, the civilian employment experience is too often driven by factors other than a worker's knowledge, skills, and motivation (e.g., social networks, discrimination, appearance).

I-O Impact: I-O psychology is well-suited to create resources for public- and private-sector employers to better help them make better employment decisions. Given the often high skill levels obtained in military service, better decision making is likely to benefit veterans by allowing them to demonstrate their skill levels.

- **Challenge:** Veterans transitioning to civilian life leave their social support networks that assists them in everyday challenges, such as mentoring, dealing with relocation issues, social support, and child care.

I-O Impact: I-O psychology is one of the few fields that recognizes and actively conducts research in work/family balance issues. I-O psychologists are often utilized by organizations to create wellness programs, assist in building professional and social support networks, and on-the-job coaching.

I-O Psychology in Practice

I-O psychologists apply evidence-based research and training to develop and implement programs to facilitate successful, satisfactory, and productive transitions for veterans. Examples of programs include:

- **Vocational Coaching Program**
In 2011, SIOP established a volunteer outreach initiative and pilot program, in collaboration with the Wounded Warriors Project, to address utility of volunteer efforts and best practices for assisting veterans as they transition out of the military. I-O psychologists apply unique expertise in hiring practices, cultural transitions, and person-job fit.
- **Veterans' Transition Initiative**
The Veterans' Transition Initiative provides volunteer consulting services to universities and corporations to best assist veterans in their transition to the civilian workforce. The program establishes mentoring relationships between volunteer I-O psychologists and service members and veterans to adapt their knowledge and skills to new work environments.
- **Study for Employment Retention of Veterans (SERVe)**
Study for Employment Retention of Veterans (SERVe) is a program funded by the Department of Defense, in partnership with Portland State University and Oregon Health and Science University, to promote veteran job satisfaction, success, and retention in the civilian workforce.

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SIOP is a community of more than 8,000 members worldwide with common interest in promoting the science, practice, and teaching of I-O psychology to enhance human well-being and performance in organizational and work settings. SIOP provides a platform for scientists, academics, consultants, and practitioners to collaborate, implement, and evaluate cutting-edge approaches to workplace challenges across sectors.

<http://www.siop.org/>