

PRIORITY IN EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE
FOR
UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES VETERANS

G.S. 143B-1280 through 143B-1285

**REPORT TO THE NORTH CAROLINA
JOINT COMMISSION
ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS**

September 30, 2025
North Carolina Department of Commerce
Division of Workforce Solutions

Background

§§ 165-44.3 through 165-44.06: Recodified as G.S. 143B-1280 through 143B-1285 by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 24.1(j), as amended by Session Laws 2015-268, s. 7.3(a), effective July 1, 2015.

On June 3, 1997, the General Assembly ratified Senate Bill 936, G.S. 165-44, a statute that requires eligible veterans to be given Priority of Service in employment and training programs. The bill indicated that veterans' priority shall apply to any State agency, department or institution, any county, city or other political subdivision of the State, any board or commission and any other public or private recipient that receives federal or State job training funds and provides employment and training assistance including, but not limited to, employability assessments, support services referrals, and vocational and educational counseling. The bill further indicated that Priority of Service is defined as providing all eligible veterans who register or otherwise apply and qualify for services the opportunity to participate in, or otherwise receive, the services provided before that opportunity is extended to other registered applicants.

The bill directs the North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development (NCWorks Commission) to submit a compliance report to the Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations annually.

Introduction

The North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS), acting on behalf of the Governor, is the recipient of funds granted through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (P.L. 113-128), the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49, et seq.), the Trade Adjustment Assistance Extension Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-40), and the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Program. DWS is the administrative and oversight agency for these funds, which are used to provide employability, training, and re-training activities to eligible persons in the state. The resources flow to the division through the U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. DOL), which has regulatory power and policy-making responsibility for activities provided with these funds. WIOA resources are required to be allocated to the 20 local Workforce Development Boards in the state, which oversee the delivery of local services to eligible individuals. Services are primarily provided through a network of NCWorks Career Centers around the state that make a variety of employment and training programs accessible to North Carolinians.

The U.S. DOL has provided guidance and policy oversight to states on the implementation of the Jobs for Veterans Act (P.L. 107-288). This law also establishes a Priority of Service for veterans and eligible spouses for services funded through the WIOA.

Implementation

North Carolina's NCWorks Career Centers ensure that services are broadly available and address the employability and support needs of individuals and businesses in the state. Staff offer core employment activities including self-service and staff-assisted services, more intensive career services, which may include in-depth assessments and career counseling, and resources for occupational skills training.

While NCWorks Career Center staff serve many special populations, the federal Jobs for Veterans Act dictates that each state has dedicated Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs), Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) and Hybrid or Consolidated (LVER/DVOP) representatives strategically assigned to service delivery points throughout the NCWorks Career Center system, to ensure accessibility to all veterans with employment or training needs. In addition, program staff offer information and employment services to service members who are transitioning out of the military at the six military installations in North Carolina. To support the state's veterans, the North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions employs 8 LVER positions supporting businesses, 12 DVOP Specialist positions supporting veterans with barriers to employment, and 27 Hybrid positions supporting both businesses and veterans. All

these personnel are themselves qualified veterans, thus conforming to the guidelines in the law.

Priority of Service to Veterans and others who meet eligibility requirements has been honored in North Carolina for decades. Throughout the workforce delivery system, Priority of Service is enhanced by the State's electronic job matching system, NCWorks Online (NCWorks.gov), which matches registered veterans to new job orders on the day they are listed - 24 hours ahead of non-veterans. DWS leaders monitor Priority of Service to veterans to ensure that all staff comply with policies which stipulate that qualified veterans are given an opportunity to apply for jobs ahead of non-veterans.

A major role and responsibility of the dedicated DWS Veterans Services staff is building the capacity of other service providers to enhance their knowledge of veterans' Priority of Service in employment and training programs. The Veterans Staff has frequent contact with other NCWorks Career Center partners to keep them informed of current veterans' employment and training issues and to assist in providing direct services to veterans. They also attend staff meetings to provide updates, answer questions from staff, and discuss needed services.

Veterans Services leadership staff are also available to provide training and guidance to career center staff and front-line Veterans staff members. They also collaborate with the management and staff of these career centers to provide outreach services for veterans, including homeless veterans, and other Veterans with Qualified Employment Barriers. Veterans Services leadership staff conduct employer outreach and plan job fairs and other activities to promote the employment of veteran customers with the state's businesses. The Consolidated position staff focus on the rural areas of the state and provide services to both employers and to the most in-need veterans. This allows one position to fill both roles to ensure veteran services are being provided in all areas of the state.

Strategies to address individual needs include literacy and basic skills programs, resources for occupational skills training, job accommodations, assistive technologies, disability awareness training, and other activities that may address barriers and support the achievement of positive employment outcomes. North Carolina has established, closely monitors, and continues to adhere to, a Priority of Service to veterans. Our Veteran Services staff have been trained and certified in Mental Health First Aid and in Peer Support Specialist, and 10 (over 20%) are certified Veteran Support Specialists (Mental illness, Post Traumatic Stress, Military Sexual Trauma, Substance Abuse). This makes North Carolina's NCWorks Veterans Services staff better prepared to assist those veterans with barriers to employment.

Outreach and Information for Veterans

In addition to veterans served through the U.S. Department of Labor funded programs referenced above, we support the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E) program. This ensures a seamless employment transition that eliminates duplication, fragmentation, or delay in delivery of employment

services, which leads to the goal of successful career selection, placement, and rehabilitation for veterans enrolled in the VA Chapter 31 program. VR&E refers all veterans who have been found entitled to services and in Job Ready status to JVSG staff. In FY25, this equated to 254 veterans who transitioned from VA support to JVSG support.

DWS offers information about services to veterans through links on the Department of Commerce main website, NCWorks Online at www.NCWorks.gov (the state's comprehensive job search/matching career exploration and labor market analysis portal for job seekers and employers), and the Veterans Portal at veterans.ncworks.gov. DWS also promotes NCWorks Veterans Services on social media, including Facebook, Twitter (X) and LinkedIn.

Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program

The division also continues to work closely with the state's two Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantees currently operating three USDOL-funded grants to assist homeless veterans. Our DVOP Specialists enroll these veterans in the NCWorks.gov veterans' program as they are simultaneously enrolled in the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program. The HVRP grantees provide services to 43 of North Carolina's 100 counties.

Female Veterans Table Talk

DWS initiated a unique program for women who are veterans, called Female Veterans Table Talk (FVTT). The main goal for FVTT is to provide resources, information and support for this unique group of women, who represent part of the fastest-growing demographic among veterans nationwide. Attendees learn about programs and services available to female veterans, along with upcoming hiring events and training opportunities. Events are periodically facilitated by female Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) staff. Events allow participants to experience a unique opportunity for fellowship and learning about resources, in a way that is safe and convenient for people over a wider geographical area. The FVTT format is straightforward but requires significant coordination by staff. Each event features one or more female guest speakers who are relevant to the female veteran community, as well as time for the attending veterans to share their stories and their life experiences.

Off-Base Transition Training

U.S. DOL selected North Carolina and 4 other states (MA, PA, CA, TX) to participate and support a new program called Off-Base Transition Training (OBTT). The FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) created this five-year pilot program which is intended to make the curriculum and services currently offered to active duty transitioning service members on military installations, available to Reservists, National Guard, veterans and military spouses. Cumberland County and Wake County were part of the initial selection by USDOL but, based on the significant success of North Carolina's OBTT pilot program, USDOL later approved North Carolina to conduct OBTT in Mecklenburg, Union, Gaston, Cabarrus, Forsyth, Guilford, Rowan, Buncombe, Craven, and Durham Counties. For FY 2025, OBTT has expanded to other counties to include Onslow, New Hanover, Johnston, Wayne, and Lee.

HIRE Vets Medallion Program

North Carolina continues to excel in the USDOL HIRE Vets Medallion Program (HVMP), which encourages employers' commitment to veteran careers, including hiring, retention, and long-term development. Employers must demonstrate a sustained commitment to hiring veterans. Supported by the efforts of the DWS Veterans Services staff, 28 NC employers were recognized with the HVMP award in 2024. The NCWorks.gov Veterans Portal highlights the businesses that received this distinction. Veteran job seekers now see the medallion on any of the awardees' job postings.

Employment Navigator Partnership Program

The U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service has selected DWS to assist in a program to enhance its ability to provide transitioning service members and their spouses with the assistance needed to be successful in the civilian workforce. The program is called the Employment Navigator Partnership Program (ENPP). Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point Havelock NC was selected as one of 13 worldwide sites for the ENPP. Employment Navigators (ENs) are now available to offer personalized, one-on-one career assistance to transitioning service members and their spouses (TSM/S). The program has grown from 13 to 49 locations worldwide. Additionally, ENs are facilitating email introductions between TSM/S and the designated state workforce agency (NCWorks Veterans Services) point of contact, who will guide them to the nearest career center based on their future residence.

Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina Veterans Services

The DWS Veterans Services Program was able to place a veteran staff member in the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina specifically to assist the tribal veterans with employment readiness and placement. The Veteran staff member engages in advocacy efforts and employment opportunities to Native American veterans to build strong and stable relationships. This is done in part through events such as Lumbee Tribe Stand Downs, one of which was held in May 2025. More than 191 veterans attended and engaged with 30+ community resources, which included over 54 health screenings being provided and over 30 disability claims. The team also has working relationships with other state-recognized tribes through engagement with the Intra-Tribal Council.

Veterans Treatment Courts (VTC)

The Veterans Treatment Courts, pre-entry solutions, engage with veterans before they enter the justice system. Unlike traditional criminal courts, the primary purpose of a VTC is not to determine whether a defendant is guilty of an offense but to ensure that he or she receives treatment to address unmet clinical needs. As a best practice, Consolidated staff collaborate with other veteran service providers on pre-entry, in-reach and outreach strategies that can help communities plan to meet the needs of justice-involved veterans using approaches that best fit their local circumstances. There are 13 VTCs throughout North Carolina in Buncombe, Catawba, Cumberland, Forsyth, Gaston, Harnett, Iredell, Moore, Onslow, New Hanover, Randolph, Rockingham, and Rowan counties. The goal is to connect eligible veterans with benefits and treatment earned through military service. NCWorks Veterans Services has

assigned one staff person who is a veteran to each of the VTCs to facilitate employment services and access to community resources.

North Carolina for Military Employment (NC4ME)

North Carolina for Military Employment (NC4ME) is a comprehensive public-private partnership designed to make NC the number one state for military employment. Established in 2015, NC4ME leverages existing workforce development resources and technology to implement an employer-centric strategy.

Since January 2025, NC4ME has hosted 12 events and participated in more than 50 engagements with strategic business leaders and employers on the value of hiring a military workforce. The team has provided accredited human resource training on how to recruit, select, and retain high performing military talent to 63 new employers. NC4ME is proud to have connected more than 1,300 new candidates with veteran-ready companies through the Career Connections 365 portal, Powered by Oplign, and face-to-face during NC4ME-hosted Career Expos and networking opportunities.

NC4ME is dedicated to supporting our veterans by bridging the gap between military service and civilian employment. The initiative ensures that veterans, transitioning service members, spouses and members of the National Guard and Reserves can leverage their unique skills and experiences to benefit local businesses and communities. This year, NC4ME has partnered with Wake Med and a Canadian-based company, 45 Drives, to support their recent expansion into the US, and further expanded direct support to the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

NC Office of State Human Resources - Military Spouse Transition Network

To support the needs of our current and future military families, the State of North Carolina is a member of the National Association of State Personnel Executives Military Spouse Transition Network (MSTN). As a partner to the MSTN, DWS Veterans staff ensure that the program is available to all identified military spouses working for state government agencies. This program is designed to help military spouses moving to or leaving North Carolina identify career resources. The program connects military spouses with career services resources to help aid in resume building, skills translation, and informal contacts to support military spouse re-employment. The program activates when a military spouse receives notification of a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) for their spouse and notifies the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) Talent Acquisition Division of their desire to participate in the program.

Hilton Honors Military Program

The Hilton Honors Military Program provides up to 100,000 hotel points to eligible Transitioning Service Members, Veterans and Military Spouses to support needed travel for verifiable employment-related activities, such as a job search, training for a new job, or finding housing near a new job. To access the program, jobseekers contact a local NCWorks Career Center and ask to speak to someone who works with Veterans. Once approved, the jobseeker can redeem the points to help pay for accommodations at any Hilton property. North Carolina received over 180 referrals for this program during the calendar year of 2024.

NLX (National Labor Exchange)

National Labor Exchange is an electronic labor-exchange network that was created in 2007 and provides a public-private partnership that leverages private non-profit-owned technology with existing state workforce agency resources. NLX allows state job banks to seamlessly receive and share job openings and is offered at no cost to state workforce agency customers (jobseekers and employers) as well as to workforce agencies and federal partners. North Carolina's state workforce agency chose NLX services based on our service needs.

Do Your Part Initiative

The Do Your Part Initiative is a collaborative effort launched by Blue Star Families in partnership with the National Governors Association, designed to encourage states to enhance support for military families. On August 6, 2025, Governor Josh Stein formally recognized North Carolina as a "Do Your Part State." This initiative assists states in identifying, prioritizing, and implementing the most effective policies and programs to meet the unique needs of military families.

As part of North Carolina's ongoing commitment to supporting military families, NCWorks Veterans Services is equipped to deliver targeted employment services to eligible veterans and their families. In addition, JVSG staff focus on building strategic partnerships with businesses across the state that are interested in hiring veterans and their dependents, further strengthening the connection between North Carolina's workforce and its military community.

Compliance

A priority measure of compliance is the comparison of the ratio of service between veterans and non-veterans. To establish that veterans are given Priority of Service, the percentage of number of veterans that applied for services and were determined eligible, compared to the number of veterans served, should not be substantially less than the ratio of non-veterans that applied for services and were determined eligible, compared to the number of non-veterans served.

The table that follows (on the next page) includes data for DWS programs for the July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025 program year.

Program	Eligible ¹	Served ²	Non-Vet Service %	Vets Eligible	Vets Served	Vet Service %
Title I - Adult	3338	2255	67.6	149	109	73.2
Title I - Dislocated Worker	1015	981	96.7	173	166	96
Title I - Youth	1450	1347	92.9	8	6	75
Title III – Wagner Peyser	83963	57483	68.5	5886	4172	70.9
Trade Adjustment Assistance	3	3	100	0	0	0

Conclusion

North Carolina has consistently demonstrated a strong and enduring commitment to prioritizing service for veterans and eligible spouses within its employment and training programs. Through coordinated efforts among state agencies and partner organizations, North Carolina has established a comprehensive and effective system that ensures veterans receive the support and opportunities necessary to thrive in the workforce.

A statewide network of dedicated staff delivers targeted assistance—particularly to veterans facing qualifying employment barriers. In addition to offering robust traditional workforce services, the state has expanded its reach through strategic partnerships. These collaborations are instrumental in advancing veteran hiring, supporting career development, and facilitating successful transitions to civilian life.

As detailed in this report, North Carolina not only meets but frequently exceeds both state and federal expectations, reaffirming its position as a national leader in serving those who have served.

¹ Here, this means a count of those who completed the program application and met all criteria to be deemed eligible.

² Here, this means a count of those who received services under the specified program.