

PRIORITY IN EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE
FOR
UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES VETERANS

Senate Bill 936
G.S. 165-44

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

September 30, 2015
North Carolina Department of Commerce
Division of Workforce Solutions

Background

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 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 in 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 NCWorks Commission (formerly called the North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development) to submit a compliance report to the Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations annually.

Introduction

The North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions, acting on behalf of the Governor, is the recipient of funds granted through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (P.L. 113-128), Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49, *et seq.*), and Trade Adjustment Assistance Extension Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-40), and Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) Veterans State Grants Program. The division 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 which has regulatory power and policy-making responsibility for activities provided with these funds. WIOA resources are required to be allocated to the 23 local Workforce Development Boards in the state who oversee the delivery of local services to eligible individuals. Services are provided through NCWorks Career Centers around the state that house a number of employment and training programs to serve the state's citizens.

The U.S. Department of Labor has provided guidance and policy oversight to the 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 Workforce Investment Act.

Implementation

North Carolina's NCWorks Career Centers ensure that services are broadly available and address the employability and support needs of the persons and businesses in the state. Staff offer core employment activities including self-service and staff-assisted services, more intensive 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 have dedicated Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPS)

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 eight military installations in North Carolina. North Carolina employs 25 LVER's and 66 DVOP's and all of these individuals are themselves qualified veterans, which conforms 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, which matches only registered veterans to new job orders on the day they are listed - 24 hours ahead of non-veterans. LVERs monitor priority of service to veterans to ensure that staff complies 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 veterans' services staff is the capacity building of other service providers to enhance their knowledge of veterans' priority of service in employment and training programs. LVER/DVOP 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. LVER/DVOP staff members attend staff meetings to provide updates on veteran services, to answer questions from staff and to discuss needed services. LVER staff are available to provide training to other center staff. DVOP staff members also collaborate with the management and staff of these centers to provide outreach services for veterans, including homeless veterans, and other veterans with significant barriers to employment. LVER staff conduct employer outreach and plan job fairs and other activities to promote the employment of veteran customers. Once a veteran's employment and training needs have been identified, the NCWorks Career Center staff ensures that appropriate services are provided.

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 achievement of positive employment outcomes. North Carolina has established, and continues to adhere to, a priority of service to veterans, as well as to low-income individuals and public assistance recipients in accordance with WIA provisions.

Outreach and Information for Veterans

In addition to veterans served through the U.S. Department of Labor funded programs referred above, the Division of Workforce Solutions offers information services to veterans through links on the Department of Commerce website and NCWorks Online at www.NCWorks.gov. This is the state's comprehensive job search/matching career exploration and labor market analysis portal for jobseekers and employers. Veterans' services also have a presence on social media, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The division began a special initiative to assist veterans who are receiving unemployment benefits to reduce claim duration. The Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Military Members (UCX) project began in March 2013 and is a two-year federal grant for veterans from the active Army, Army Reserves and NC National Guard.

Compliance

The comparison of the ratio of service between veterans and non-veterans has been determined to be the measure of compliance. To establish that veterans were given priority of service, the ratio 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 below includes data for Division of Workforce Solutions' programs for the July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015 program year.

Program	#Vets Eligible	#Vets Served	Vets Service Ratio	#Non-Vets Eligible	#Non-Vets Served	Non-Vet Service Ratio
WIA Title I-B Adult	535	510	95.3	11,151	10,166	91.2
WIA Title I-B Dislocated Workers	244	242	99.2	3,158	3,100	98.2
WIA Title I-B Youth	5	3	60.0	2,896	2,602	89.8
Wagner-Peyser Employment Services	44,281	33,037	74.6	517,662	428,981	82.9
Apprenticeship	1,782	1,782	100	3,730	3,730	100
Trade Adjustment Act	23	23	100	349	349	100