



VETERAN DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

A CALL FOR AWARENESS & ACTION

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Discrimination against military members and veterans in the workplace remains a significant and urgent concern that warrants our attention. Despite the bravery exhibited by those who have served our nation, alarming statistics shed light on the pervasive biases faced by veterans in civilian employment settings. Recognizing the extent of this discrimination is paramount in fostering workplaces that champion diversity and prioritize the mental well-being of our veterans.

Veteran Discrimination

Studies indicate that a notable number of veterans encounter discrimination throughout their employment journeys. Disturbing trends reveal that veterans belonging to protected classes, such as those with disabilities or from specific ethnic backgrounds, are particularly susceptible to discrimination.

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 2021, employers paid approximately \$484 million in settlements to victims of discrimination.



Moreover, in the United States, 61% of employees have experienced or were witness to workplace bias. The staggering 146.9% increase in retaliation charges between 1997-2020 primarily affects members of protected classes[i].

Mental Wellness Effects

Discrimination against veterans can have severe consequences on their mental health. The emotional toll of facing bias in the workplace contributes to heightened stress levels, issues with self-esteem, and anxiety. In some instances, it can exacerbate conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Discrimination can extend beyond the individual veterans, affecting their personal lives and impacting their families and friendships. Research conducted at UCLA found that exposure to long-term discrimination not only increased the likelihood of developing other mental disorders but also showed correlations between substance abuse and adverse health effects.[ii] These influences not only affect the individual veterans but also impact workforce morale and productivity,

[i] [30+ ALARMING EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION STATISTICS \[2023\]: RECENT EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION CASES - ZIPPIA](#)

[ii] [HTTPS://NEWSROOM.UCLA.EDU/STORIES/DISCRIMINATION-CAN-BE-HARMFUL-TO-YOUR-MENTAL-HEALTH](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/discrimination-can-be-harmful-to-your-mental-health)

potentially leading to legal disputes and decreased retention within the organizations.



Civil Mediation for Veteran Discrimination

In civil mediation, cases of military and veteran discrimination demand a nuanced approach. Identifying subtle biases, addressing the psychological impact on affected parties, and fostering open dialogue are critical aspects of resolving such disputes. Mediation serves as a platform to uncover the root causes of discrimination and work towards comprehensive solutions that benefit all parties involved. To proactively tackle workplace bias and mitigate the risk of potential litigation, several solutions are proposed.

Problem-Solving Solutions to Prevent Prejudice and Discrimination

Education and Training: Employers should invest in training programs to raise awareness about the Uniformed Service Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (VEVRAA) regulations by the EEOC[1] and their detrimental effects on transitioning veterans, reservists, and currently employed/contracted veterans. Providing education on the value of military experience, and military culture (including military etiquette), and addressing stereotypes can create a more inclusive workplace. Additionally, addressing other discriminatory areas outlined by various laws is crucial. Other legal laws that protect Veterans in the workplace:

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

The Equal Pay Act of 1963

Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967

Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008

The Immigration and Nationality Act's Anti-

Discrimination Provision Executive Order 11246

Establishing Clear Strict Policies: Implementing clear and comprehensive anti-discrimination enforcement policies is essential. These policies should explicitly address military and veteran discrimination, outlining consequences for violators and the HR Managers that, in some cases, protect violators by providing an optional anonymous mechanism for reporting incidents to leadership, with military experience, designated to deal with Military/Veteran employee affairs within the organization.

Mental Health Support Programs: Employers can introduce outsourced mental health support programs tailored for veterans, ensuring they have access to transparent digestible resources and external assistance when facing discrimination. This proactive approach contributes to a workplace culture that prioritizes employee well-being.

Diverse Recruitment Initiatives: Actively seek to diversify the workforce by implementing recruitment initiatives that specifically target military spouses, reservists, transitioning veterans, and veterans. Recognizing the unique transferable



[https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/discrimination-can-be-harmful-to-your-mental-health%20%20%20Protections%20Against%20Employment%20Discrimination%20for%20Service%20Members%20and%20Veterans%20%7C%20U.S.%20Equal%20Employment%20Opportunity%20Commission%20\(eeoc.gov\)](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/discrimination-can-be-harmful-to-your-mental-health%20%20%20Protections%20Against%20Employment%20Discrimination%20for%20Service%20Members%20and%20Veterans%20%7C%20U.S.%20Equal%20Employment%20Opportunity%20Commission%20(eeoc.gov))

[https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/discrimination-can-be-harmful-to-your-mental-health%20%20%20Protections%20Against%20Employment%20Discrimination%20for%20Service%20Members%20and%20Veterans%20%7C%20U.S.%20Equal%20Employment%20Opportunity%20Commission%20\(eeoc.gov\)](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/discrimination-can-be-harmful-to-your-mental-health%20%20%20Protections%20Against%20Employment%20Discrimination%20for%20Service%20Members%20and%20Veterans%20%7C%20U.S.%20Equal%20Employment%20Opportunity%20Commission%20(eeoc.gov))



Drawing from my experience as a former Director of Recruitment within the financial services industry and rolling out a successful military employment recruiting group (ERG), I've found that building credibility and fostering rapport are paramount in attracting military candidates. It's essential to take a proactive approach by engaging with military non-profits beyond mere financial contributions. Volunteering time to support the military community demonstrates genuine commitment and strengthens connections. Additionally, active involvement in military networks provides access to valuable resources and best practices for retaining military employees and fostering a military-friendly workplace culture.

For companies dedicated to enhancing their military recruitment efforts, exploring additional initiatives can be transformative. Consider pursuing certifications for peer mentorships focused on PTSD, implementing childcare programs tailored for veterans and military spouses, and developing an onboarding buddy system specifically for new veteran employees. These measures not only demonstrate a commitment to supporting veterans but also contribute to a more inclusive and supportive workplace environment.

As we navigate the complexities of military and veteran discrimination, fostering awareness of unconscious bias and rights, implementing proactive measures, and leveraging mediation as a transformative tool can pave the way toward workplaces that honor the service of our veterans. Addressing this issue directly brings us closer to building a truly equitable and supportive professional landscape for all.

If you are a veteran or military service member who may have or is experiencing discrimination in the workplace. There are several organizations that specialize in Military and Veteran discrimination.

- U.S. Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP)
- U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)
- U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (CRT)
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)



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