

Why Health Care is a Great Fit for Military Veterans

By Rachel Russell, Director of Marketing for Epic Health Services

The first time Marine Corps veteran Leah Nicholls picked up the phone as a junior recruiter for Dallas-based Epic Health Services in late 2014, she was sweating profusely.

"I didn't have any health care or recruiting experience," Leah says. "I told my colleagues that combat was easier."

True to form, though, Leah stuck with it, and she's now a talent acquisition manager for Epic, the country's largest provider of comprehensive in-home pediatric care for medically fragile children. It was during a phone call with a nurse at Epic who is a Vietnam veteran that Leah realized health care is exactly where she needed to be. "This nurse was telling me how much she appreciated that veterans are being given a chance in the civilian sector at Epic," Leah says. The nurse went on to tell Leah how much she loved taking care of people, and in the case of Epic, how much she loved taking care of children who deserve exceptional care the most.

"When you're in health care, you're in the business of people," Leah says. "I get to impact a life every day."

And Epic—which has 3,000 military veterans on staff at any given time and plans to hire an additional 900 in 2016—has caught on to something: Veterans make excellent employees, especially in health care. Why? Because so many of the characteristics that veterans possess and skills they've fine-tuned during their service are also essential in health care, Leah



Leah Nicholls

explains.

A few examples include:

- ✪ **Selfless service:** Members of the military put their needs on the backburner when they pledge to serve their country. That kind of selfless service, Leah says, is needed in health care because you can be dealing with patients who have life-threatening illnesses and are counting on you for comfort and healing.
 - ✪ **Leadership:** In the military, it's "advance or move on," Leah says. Military members want to move up in rank, so they understand the leadership it takes to carry out a mission. In both the military and health care, there are lives on the line, and strong leadership is required.
 - ✪ **Dedication:** No one would ever deny that to make it through military service, you must be dedicated. Health care is a highly competitive field with
- much at stake, and dedication to the job is crucial.
- ✪ **Investment in training:** Military members go through extensive training, and health care demands lots of training as well. Luckily, that investment is something veterans already value.
- That's not all though: Leah points out other similarities she's seen between her military and civilian careers, including the daily grind. "In both health care and the military, the days are never the same," she says. "There's always a new issue to tackle, and being adaptive and able to roll with the punches is crucial in both fields. If you're on a convoy in Afghanistan and lose crucial equipment, the mission doesn't stop. It's the same thing in health care. The show must go on, either way."
- The options are wide open for military veterans who are considering health care: Roles range from sales positions to

operators and customer service representatives, with most requiring no prerequisites. "We can mold you just like the military did," Leah says.

For those veterans who think having no health care experience is a reason not to pursue the field, Leah gives this advice: "You went into the military not knowing what would happen or what training was to come, so what's the difference in coming into health care and giving it a shot? Either way, you're going to walk away with an experience you can talk about." As Leah points out, health care will always be a basic need for people, so it's a field that's always going to be around and on the lookout for dedicated employees.

"When you work in health care, you're still serving others—you're just wearing a different uniform," Leah says. "It almost feels like some days I didn't even leave the military."