



AMERICA'S HEROES AT WORK

SUPPORTING THE EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS OF
RETURNING SERVICE MEMBERS WITH TBI & PTSD

*** Employment Success Strategies

Workplace Mentoring

A Promising Practice for Supporting Employees with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

When it comes to employment, several promising practices exist to help transitioning service members with TBI, PTSD and many other disabilities and/or combat-related injuries succeed in the workplace. One such practice is mentoring.

WHO IS A MENTOR?

A mentor is a person who through support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement and constructive example helps another person to reach his or her personal and professional goals. Inside and outside of the workplace, mentoring relationships provide valuable support to individuals, especially those with disabilities, by offering not only career guidance, but also effective role models for leadership, interpersonal and problem-solving skills.

THE BENEFITS OF MENTORING

All mentoring relationships share a common goal of helping people grow. While young people have been the traditional beneficiaries of mentoring, increasing numbers of employers have implemented mentoring programs in the workplace for one simple reason—mentoring produces positive results, both immediate and for years to come.

Through mentoring, employers gain:

- An effective employee recruitment and retention tool
- Improved supervisory skills, work habits and productivity
- Increased employee job satisfaction
- A way to promote professional development within the organization
- An opportunity to create positive attitudinal changes in an organization's culture
- An opportunity to help shape the workforce of tomorrow

Research shows that mentors derive the following benefits from their experience:

- Increased self-esteem
- A sense of accomplishment
- Increased patience and improved supervisory skills

MENTORING FORMATS

Mentoring relationships take different forms, and may include interaction that takes place off-site and outside of work hours. Some popular models of workplace mentoring include:

- **Peer Mentoring:** A person close in age to his or her mentee acts as a sounding board for ideas and plans and provides guidance in an informal manner.
- **Disability Mentoring:** A person with a disability mentors another person, usually with a similar disability.
- **Group Mentoring:** A mentor works with a group of mentees with similar interests and needs.
- **E-mentoring:** A mentor advises a mentee through e-mail or the Internet.

WORKPLACE MENTORING OF EMPLOYEES WITH TBI AND/OR PTSD

Many employers are learning that peer-to-peer mentorship programs within the workplace can help employees with TBI and PTSD succeed in their jobs. Mentors can offer these individuals guidance on appropriate interpersonal skills and work behaviors, assist with one-on-one job training at the worksite, problem-solve as needed, and help acclimate the individual to the workplace. As the employee with TBI or PTSD develops job skills, the involvement with the mentor decreases or “fades.” The fading process can foster autonomy by gradually transitioning the employee as he or she learns to perform the job independently.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Because mentoring relationships are between individuals, each is unique; however, all effective mentoring relationships have certain

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things in common. For example, the longer the relationship continues, the more positive the outcome. Individuals who perceive high-quality relationships with their mentors experience the best results. Successful TBI and PTSD mentoring program practices include:

- Pre-screening of mentors to ensure suitability
- Making structured and regularly monitored mentoring matches
- Providing training for mentors, both before a match and periodically throughout the relationship
- Focusing on the needs and interests of the mentee, not the expectations of mentors
- Ensuring that appropriate levels of visibility and accountability are built into the mentoring relationship, including the relationship between the supervisory staff and the mentor

DISABILITY MENTORING DAY

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), with support from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, sponsors Disability Mentoring Day. This annual event promotes career development for students and job-seekers with disabilities through job shadowing and hands-on career exploration. Both public and private employers provide one-on-one mentoring for students to learn about the preparation necessary to qualify for a range of job opportunities. Disability Mentoring Day is held annually each October, but the program can be implemented by employers at any time throughout the year. For more information about ways employers can participate, visit www.dmd-aapd.org.

RESOURCES

Other sources of information about mentoring include:

- MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership (www.mentoring.org)
- The National Mentoring Center (www.nwrel.org/mentoring)
- The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (www.ncwd-youth.info)
- Connecting to Success: Technology in Mentoring Programs and e-Mentoring (ici.umn.edu/ementoring/mentors/default.html)

Information about other promising employment practices—including job coaching, natural workplace supports and customized employment—can be found on the America's Heroes at Work Web site: www.AmericasHeroesAtWork.gov.

This fact sheet was developed in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Disability Employment Policy, the Job Accommodation Network, the Veterans' Employment and Training Service, the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, and the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center.

