



Wounded Warrior Voice

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TOPIC OF THE MONTH: Mental Health Awareness Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and was created to increase awareness about behavioral health and reduce stigma. As is true in the civilian sector, the Army also has a stigma associated with behavioral health. Stigma prevents many Soldiers, Veterans, and Families from seeking help. There are many resources to reach to for professional assistance, here are a few examples:

- Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury Outreach Center: http://www.dcoe.health.mil/media/DCoE_News/DCoE_Outreach_Center.aspx, (866) 966-1020
- The Department of Veterans Affairs Vet Center Program Community Based Counseling Centers: <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>, (800) 905-4675 (Eastern) and (866) 496-8838 (Pacific)
- Afterdeployment.org: <http://afterdeployment.org/web/guest/home>
- Mental Health Self Assessment Program: <http://www.militarymentalhealth.org/>

Families and caregivers need support as well to avoid compassion fatigue. In order to help others, take care of yourselves. For some helpful tips found on the [Real Warriors website](#) to help build resilience, see below:

- Focus on the positive impact of what you are doing
- Talk to your colleagues/Family for support
- Set boundaries for yourself
- Stay physically fit
- Avoid comparing yourself with others
- Be patient with yourself
- Find tools for resilience

WHAT'S NEW: Let the Games Begin!

By Erich Langer, Stratcom

Several AW2 Continue on Active Duty Soldiers and Veterans are busy training for the inaugural Warrior Games. AW2 Advocates were instrumental in assisting AW2 Soldiers/Veterans in submitting nomination packets for this year's competition. Athletes are training hard as the games approach and soon will travel to Colorado Springs for the competition. Air travel and food/lodging expenses are being taken

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care of by DoD and the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC). All competitors and cadre will be issued Warrior Games athletic gear upon arrival at the USOC campus; never-the-less, athletes should bring their Army PT uniforms. If your Warrior Games athletes have any questions about transportation, logistics, equipment, etc., they may contact MSG James Shiver (james.shiver@us.army.mil). AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Families who desire to travel to the Games should contact the USO (Tiane Harrison at tharrison@USO.org) for local information.

To keep up with the Games, watch USOC's video coverage on their website at <http://usparalympics.org/>, subscribe to automatic daily media updates from the Paralympic Team at <http://usparalympics.org/ngb/rss>, and visit:

- AW2 Blog: <http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/>
- WTC Blog: <http://wtc.armylive.dodlive.mil/blog/>
- USOC Paralympic Military Program: <http://usparalympics.org/usoc-paralympic-military-program>

WHAT'S NEW: Board Reassesses Service Disability Ratings

Recommendations from a congressionally directed Defense Department disability review board have resulted in 61 percent of applicants having their status changed from a medical separation to retirement on the permanent disability list. The board reassessed the accuracy and fairness of the combined disability rating assigned to servicemembers who were separated due to unfitness for duty because of a medical condition with a disability rating of 20 percent or less and weren't retirement-eligible. The review considered only servicemembers separated from the armed forces between September 11, 2001, and December 31, 2009.

The Defense Department has identified about 77,000 Veterans eligible to apply for a board review. The request for review may come from the Veteran, surviving spouse, next of kin, or legal guardian. Once the board reviews a case and makes a recommendation, the appropriate service secretary or a designee will decide whether to accept the board's recommendation. Veterans cannot appeal a decision made as a result of the review board process. Eligible Veterans can request a board review by submitting a [DD Form 294](#), Application for Review of Physical Disability Separation from the Armed Forces of the United States. For more information, visit

http://www.health.mil/About_MHS/Organizations/MHS_Offices_and_Programs/PDBR.aspx. (SOURCE: American Forces Press Service, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=58164>)

WHAT'S NEW: Streamlined Disability Evaluation System Expanding Availability

The Defense Department's Disability Evaluation System (DES) pilot program, a joint initiative with the Veterans Affairs Department to simplify and streamline the disability evaluation system for wounded, injured, or ill servicemembers, is expanding to additional Army installations. On March 31, 2010, the DES pilot program is operating at Fort Benning, GA; Fort Bragg, NC; Fort Hood, TX; Fort Lewis, WA; and Fort Riley, KS. These Phase II locations are in addition to those where the program was established earlier during Phase I: Fort Belvoir, VA; Fort Meade, MD; Fort Stewart, GA.; Fort Polk, LA; Fort Richardson, AK; Fort Wainwright, AK; Fort Carson, CO.; and Fort Sam Houston, TX. The DES pilot program makes the overall disability evaluation process faster, fairer, and simpler by combining the separate DOD and VA disability systems. That eliminates redundant medical exams and disability ratings. The pilot program's process is for a Soldier to get one comprehensive physical exam by a VA-certified doctor and

receive a "Service Unfitting" rating and a single VA-determined disability rating that both DOD and VA recognize. Those who've gone through the pilot program's process see VA disability benefits in less than eight months on average compared to an average 18 months via the regular system. (SOURCE: STAND-TO!, http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2010/03/05/?s_cid=email)

WHAT'S NEW: Wounded Warrior Website Upgraded

The Department of Defense announced that its National Resource Directory (NRD) Web site <http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/> for wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers, Veterans, their Families, and those who support them, recently received a comprehensive system upgrade to provide users with easier access. The upgrade makes the latest wounded warrior and Veteran issues easier to locate and follow. A new "bookmark and share" application helps visitors alert others to the content they've found most helpful through social bookmarking, Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking tools. Visitors can also subscribe to Really Simple Syndication (RSS) or e-mail updates to receive new content, events, and features based on their specific interests and needs.

The faster, enhanced search engine ranks information based on the popularity of the sources among other site users, so the most valuable resources rise to the top of the search results. Visitors can tailor searches for resources in specific states and territories, and apply filters to narrow their searches. The re-designed site also highlights resources to assist homeless Veterans. NRD users can also recommend additional resources. All resources are thoroughly vetted prior to inclusion on the National Resource Directory, and as always, content is updated and reviewed daily by a content management team which includes Veterans and subject matter experts. For more information, visit <http://www.NationalResourceDirectory.gov>. (SOURCE: DOD Press Release, <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=13328>)

WHAT'S NEW: Invalidation/Cancellation of Birth Certificates Issued in Puerto Rico Prior to July 1, 2010

A Puerto Rican law will be implemented July 1, 2010, canceling or invalidating all birth certificates issued by Puerto Rico prior to June 30, 2010. Affected Soldiers, civilian employees, and Family members will need to request issue of a new birth certificate following the procedures at the following link. For new accessions, certificates issued by Puerto Rico prior to June 30, 2010, will become invalid and may not be used to verify eligibility for enlistment into the Army effective July 1, 2010. For more information, read the *Army News* article at <http://www.army.mil/news/2010/03/15/35879-puerto-rico-plans-to-cancel-previously-issued-birth-certificates-in-july/> or visit <http://www.prfaa.com/>.

MONEY MATTERS: Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay

Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay is dispensing special pay to Soldiers, Veterans, and survivors of Soldiers whose service was involuntarily extended between September 11, 2001, and September 30, 2008. Servicemembers are eligible to receive \$500 for every month or partial month served under stop loss authority. To receive this pay, those who served under stop loss must submit a claim before October 21, 2010. The Army has created an online claim process for all components to apply at <https://www.stoplosspay.army.mil>. The Army estimates

at least 120,000 Soldiers and Veterans qualify for the special pay. Currently, less than 20,000 have applied. (SOURCE: S1NET)

MONEY MATTERS: AW2 Finance Specialists Provide Assistance for AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and Their Families

By Cori Cabell, AW2 Advocate and Dexter B. Friday, AW2 Finance Specialist

AW2 has a team of finance specialists whose sole purpose is to assist you with any pay issues e.g. active, retired, or Veterans Affairs (VA). Finance is an integral part of the transition from the Army to civilian life. The AW2 Financial Specialists are available by appointment through your AW2 Advocate who will be happy to facilitate the telephone conference. There are a few financial services you may be interested in taking advantage of during your transition. Some of the financial services offered to AW2 Soldiers are:

1. Finance Retirement Estimate (a side by side comparison of estimated VA Compensation and Army Retirement Pay)
2. On time retirement account setup
3. Combat Related Special Compensation and/or Concurrent Receipt of Disability Pay consultation
4. Assistance with resolving financial issues

ADVOCATE SUPPORT: DFAS Urges Retirees to Update myPay Accounts

By Ron Perry, AW2 Finance Advisor

If Soldiers have not updated their profile since the myPay security system was upgraded in November, accessing pay records quickly may be difficult. myPay users are encouraged to establish new login credentials, including personalized login IDs and passwords as soon as possible. If Soldiers are still working on their taxes, it is even more important to ensure they have access to their records. Soldiers can avoid the additional stress of missing tax documents by enrolling in myPay. With myPay Soldiers can log-on and access copies of their 1099-R quickly and without the hold up of waiting for it to arrive via snail mail. Visit the DFAS Web site to establish your new login credentials, including personalized login IDs and passwords. Step-by-step instructions in both text and video are available at the myPay site at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx> and the DFAS Web site at <http://www.dfas.mil/>.

Using myPay, Soldiers will be able to:

- See the last two Retiree Account Statements
- See the last IRS 1099-R
- Change the federal tax withholding status and exemptions
- Change the state tax
- Start, stop, or change allotments
- Start, stop, or change bonds
- Change or update correspondence address
- Update financial institution information

BENEFITS: Have You Heard of EMMA®?

EMMA® is an Electronic Medication Management Assistant especially for patients suffering from cognitive impairments such as traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is a TRICARE benefit for wounded warriors, and the pilot program for this system has been used at several Warrior Transition

Units. It is remotely programmed by the pharmacist, insuring that the patient's medications are delivered according to the physician's prescribed dosing instructions. It holds up to 10 medication administration cartridges, uses a standard 115 volt home outlet, and requires no programming by the patient or caregiver. It helps manage medications and provides reminders. For more information, read the EMMA® brochure

http://www.inrangesystems.com/tricare/pdf_forms/Folder%20Insert%20-%20Wounded%20Warrior.PDF or recent press releases at

<http://www.inrangesystems.com/uploads/File/USArmyExpandsEMMAProg.pdf>.

CAREER & EDUCATION: The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV)

The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) is an educational program providing world-class training in entrepreneurship and small business management, to post-9/11 Veterans with a service-connected disability. The EBV is a program specifically for Veterans, and is designed to develop competencies in the many steps and activities associated with creating and sustaining an entrepreneurial venture. The EBV program is offered by six business schools—Texas A&M University, Florida State University, Purdue University, University of California Los Angeles, University of Connecticut, and Syracuse University. The EBV represents an opportunity for those who have sacrificed to take an important step toward realizing their own economic freedom—through entrepreneurship. For more information, visit <http://whitman.syr.edu/ebv/>.

(SOURCE: EBV Brochure)

CAREER & EDUCATION: Employment Program to Resume for Enrolled Spouses

The Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts program, commonly known as MyCAA, resumed March 13, for the more than 136,000 spouses who already have established an account. Officials announced a temporary halt in the program February 18, pending a top-to-bottom review. There was a six-fold spike in enrollments in January, and the surge that overwhelmed the system and caused the program to nearly reach its budget threshold. While the program will resume for enrolled spouses, new MyCAA accounts or financial assistance applications will not be accepted yet—the comprehensive review of the program still is under way.

For more information, contact Military OneSource at (800) 342-9647 or at <http://militaryonesource.com>. (SOURCE: American Forces Press Service, <http://www.army.mil/-news/2010/03/12/35746-employment-program-to-resume-for-enrolled-spouses/>)

CAREER & EDUCATION: Tutors for Dependents

The Department of Defense is now offering unlimited access to certified, professional tutors 24/7 through a partnership with Tutors.com. The services provided are available to all active duty servicemembers and their dependents. Homework help and study guidance are available for all those returning to school or for their spouses/children. Test preparation courses offer a systematic approach to taking on standardized testing, and writing skills can be strengthened through one-on-one proofreading and editing. For those transitioning out of active duty, resume writing and career guidance are also areas of expertise for the certified tutors employed at Tutor.com. For more information on registering, please visit

www.tutor.com/military-programs. For more information on Computer/Electronics Accommodations Program's (CAP) Wounded Service Member Initiative, please visit www.tricare.mil/cap/wsm. (SOURCE: CAP Wounded Service Member Initiative, www.tricare.mil/cap)

CAREER & EDUCATION: Veterans Benefits Administration Non-paid Work Experience

Some wounded warriors (WW) who are referred to hiring managers or identified in the WW Resume Inventory may not have the experience needed to be considered for a Command's available vacancies. In those instances, we ask Commands to consider creating a Non-Paid Work Experience (NPWE) opportunity for the WW. Civilian Human Resources Agency and a Command can coordinate with an employment coordinator in the Veteran's Benefits Administration (VBA) to set-up the experience.

The VBA's NPWE provides eligible Veterans with the opportunity to obtain training and practical job experience concurrently. This program is ideal for eligible Veterans who have a clearly established career goal and who learn easily in a hands-on environment. After placement in the NPWE program, a VBA Case Manager/Employment Specialist will closely monitor the Veteran's progress to ensure that all training goals are being met. While a Command doesn't pay the WW a salary, the VBA does provide them with a small stipend.

After the Command helps the WW gain experience, we do ask them to consider hiring the WW non-competitively into a permanent appointment, although that is not a requirement. For more information, please contact Jean Tyler, Human Resources Specialist at jean.tyler@us.army.mil or (703) 602-1253. (SOURCE: Susan K. Manke, Director, Headquarters, Department of Army, Civilian Personnel Advisory Center)

CAREER & EDUCATION: AW2 Veterans and Federal Employment (Part II)

By Scott Cox, Career Specialist In the last e-newsletter, we discussed Veterans leveraging advantages to seek federal employment. This month, we will discuss specific documentation required. It is important to note that if an AW2 Veteran wants to secure federal employment, he or she can simply apply direct. However, if the Veteran wants a competitive edge, then the Veteran can take advantage of the Disabled Veteran Preference Status. There are documentation requirements to validate eligibility. The three documents together— Standard Form 15, DD Form 214, and VA letter of Veterans Preference Certification—or just one document alone, may be required. The SF-15 form is available at http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/SF15.pdf and if a Veteran does not have his/her DD-214, they can request one at <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/>. The Veteran must meet certain requirements for the Veteran preference letter, call (800) 827-1000 for more information. For additional information, contact your AW2 Advocate.

VA UPDATE: eBenefits Portal

The eBenefits portal is a joint VA and DOD project that allows servicemembers and Veterans to access and retrieve copies of their official military documents, medical and physical examinations, active and reserve orders, and more. During

spring 2010, version 2.3 of eBenefits will provide more robust functionality that will allow servicemembers and Veterans to check the status of their claim for compensation and pension and obtain home loan certificate of eligibility. Active duty Soldiers should register for the site before being discharged from the military. This ensures that they will have immediate access to their personnel records as well as immediate access to VA Benefit information. Additionally, they will have immediate access to all of the new functions the site will offer in the future. Please register at www.ebenefits.va.gov.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Sharing your stories lets other Soldiers, Veterans, and Families know that they are not alone in dealing with an injury, wound, or illness. Sharing what you do and learning what others are doing to address these issues creates new opportunities for healing. AW2 may publish your story on the AW2 Blog or the AW2 print newsletter, *The Journey*. We would also like to highlight special messages from spouses and children for their loved ones on the AW2 Blog. Messages should be between one to three paragraphs long or could be a drawing or a short poem. If your Families would like to send in their messages, please fax messages to (703) 325-1535 or e-mail AW2Stratcomm@conus.army.mil.

THE BLOG UPDATE: April

Resiliency and Compassion Fatigue

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/26/resiliency-and-compassion-fatigue/>

AW2 Annual Training—Changing Futures

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/24/aw2-annual-training%e2%80%94changing-futures/>

Wounded Warriors from Walter Reed Ready to Fight For the Title of 'Ultimate Warrior'

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/23/wounded-warriors-from-walter-reed-ready-to-fight-for-the-title-of-%e2%80%94ultimate-warrior%e2%80%99/>

New Veterans Benefits Excite AW2 Advocates

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/23/new-veterans-benefits-excite-aw2-advocates/>

AW2 Career and Education Section Offers Practical Advice for Wounded Warriors

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/23/aw2-career-and-education-section-offers-practical-advice-for-wounded-warriors/>

Networking with Resources

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/21/networking-with-resources/>

It's All About the People

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/20/its-all-about-the-people/>

Confabulation

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/16/confabulation/>

Extended FMLA for Federal Employees to Care for Wounded Warriors

<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/14/extended-fmla-for-federal-employees-to-care-for-wounded-warriors/>

Watch the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games Highlights on NBC
<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/09/watch-the-2010-paralympic-winter-games-highlights-on-nbc/>

Hard Roads Lead to Smooth Paving, Good Scenery, and Peace of Mind
<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/08/hard-roads-lead-to-smooth-paving-good-scenery-and-peace-of-mind/>

AW2 Weekly Digest March 29-April 2
<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/07/aw2-weekly-digest-march-29-april-2/>

Understanding the Importance of Counseling and Health
<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/02/understanding-the-importance-of-counseling-and-health/>

New Web Site for Veterans Seeking Federal Jobs
<http://aw2.armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/04/02/new-web-site-for-veterans-seeking-federal-jobs/>

AW2 ADVOCATES IN THE FIELD: Lisa Smith Rodriguez

Advocate Lisa Smith Rodriguez started as an AW2 Advocate in March 2010. In her role as an Advocate she provides transition support to Soldiers, Veterans, and Families when regional Advocates are in transition mode and when the need arises. Currently, she is providing support to Soldiers and Families in Indiana and Nebraska throughout the Central Region. She comes from an extensive background in disability claims. Rodriguez has served as a trainer and analyst for Combat-Related Special Compensation. She was the military claims liaison for Disability Determination Services for the state of North Carolina with the Social Security Administration. Most recently, she brings her experience as the Database Administrator for the MODS-Warrior Transition Module. Rodriguez' husband serves in the Army, and he recently returned from deployment in Afghanistan. She loves serving Soldiers and their Families because she can relate to their experiences. Rodriguez is located at AW2 Headquarters and can be reached at lisa.smith.rodriguez@us.army.mil or (703) 325-2704.

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