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Study of Employment Retention Veterans (SERVe): Improving Reintegration of Oregon National Guard and Reserves in the Workplace

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Study of Employment Retention for Veterans (SERVe)
Improving Reintegration of Oregon National Guard and Reserves in the Workplace

Gil Brady, B.Sc. – Graduate Student, Applied Psychology
Leslie Hammer, PhD – Principle Investigator
5-year DOD Funded Project
2/8/13-2/7/18

• U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (USAMRMC)

• U.S. Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity (USAMRRAA)
Today’s Objectives

- Provide an overview of the challenges of reservist veteran reintegration into society
- Illustrate mechanisms of Social Support on Stress Reduction
- Provide an overview and timeline of the project
What is resilience and who has it?
Background
Economic Effects of Young Veteran Rollercoaster Employment

- Veteran Labor Force Pop = 11.1 million (est. 2013)
- Vet Out of Labor Force Pop = 10.4 million (est. 2013)

Unemployment rate %

- post-9/11 Vets (18-24)
- post-9/11 Vets (18-64)
- All Vets, working-age (Vietnam, etc.)
- Young Gen Pop (non-vets, 18-24)
- Gen Pop (non-vets)
- Reservist (18-64)

Since 9/11:

- More than 2.8 million U.S. military personnel have served in and around Iraq & Afghanistan.
- They represent 13% of all veterans of any era.
- By 2018, the number of post-9/11 veterans is projected to top 3.1 million.
- Currently, 18% of these post-9/11 veterans have difficulty holding a job and many experience family difficulties.

Other post-9/11 Veterans

➢ Reservists:

• The citizen-soldiers of the Air & Army National Guard as well as other reserve components (i.e., Marines, Navy, & Coast Guard) have been mobilized by their respective branch of service at unprecedented levels to prosecute these decade(s)-long wars.

• Presently, 33% of all post-9/11 veterans – some 874,728 service members & counting – have deployed to various global hotspots as active-duty reservists of the U.S. armed forces.

What do we know about this subgroup of about 900,000 and counting post-9/11 Reservist Veterans?
Unique Veteran Reservists
Reintegration Issues

- **Bye-bye active-duty pay!**

  - When reservists demobilize their active-duty pay of $3,000-plus/month ends within weeks of returning home. Many reservists are young (18-24), lack transferable job skills and deploy either without a steady civilian job or without secure civilian employment.

  - Even with unemployment benefits available upon return, they pose a steep cut in monthly income. The current Washington policy of denying reservists a “soft landing” (i.e., continuation of active-duty pay) for their reintegration phase places added stress on reservists during this critical transition to civilian life as well as increased strain on their families, too.

  - Post-9/11 reservists, many having endured multiple deployments, have been referred *twice as much for mental health treatment* (42% NG/Reserves v. 20% Active Component) *during the first year post-deployment* (JAMA, 2007).

  --(Adler et al., 2011; Hammer & Brady, 2011; Milliken et al., 2007)
Reintegration Challenges: Veteran Reservists

Unlike active-duty troops, veteran reservists return to few if any community & social supports such as:

- Problems with steady & secure employment
  - Termination of active-duty pay
  - No paid military base housing
  - No convenient medical care
  - No access to quality child care

--(Adler, 2011; Hammer et al., 2011)
Objective

• Develop, implement, and evaluate a civilian-based veteran-supportive supervisor training (VSST) program leading to improved work and home reintegration of Oregon National Guard and Reserve Component servicemen and women.
Project Overview: Why is this needed?

- Many programs focus on recruitment and hiring of veterans
- Very little attention is on post-deployment reintegration into the workforce
- *No programs* focus specifically on modifying the workplace to improve veteran reintegration-related experiences
- Good evidence suggests that “resilience” may be innate (*Scientific American*, 2011).
What We Hope To Change

• Increased civilian supervisor support of NG/RC veterans should lead to:
  • Decrease veteran job strain
  • Increase veteran psychological and physical health
  • Increase veteran marital quality
  • Increase veteran job satisfaction
  • Increase veteran job retention
Conceptual Model of Veteran-Supportive Supervisor Training Intervention, Health, and Work Outcomes

**VSST**

- Supervisor Elements: Training and Self-Monitoring
  - *USERRA* laws
  - Stigma Reduction
  - Supportive Behaviors
  - Existing Resources

**Mediating Processes**

- Increased Social Support from Supervisors
- Reduced Stress and Job Strain
  - Work-Family Conflict
  - Job Demands
  - Job Control

**OUTCOMES**

- **Veteran and Spouse/Partner Health**
  - Cardiovascular risk factors, BMI, Psychological Distress

- **Organizational Health**
  - Retention, absenteeism, health care costs
Effects of Social Support & Oxytocin

Model of Social Support as a Mediator/Moderator of Psychosocial outcomes

-- (Olff, 2012)
Social Support and Oxytocin Interact to Suppress Cortisol and Subjective Response to Psychosocial Stress

--(Heinrichs et al., 2003)
Research Plan: Overview

1. Conduct Focus Groups with 16 ONG/RC Veterans and 16 Supervisors to inform the training

2. Recruit and collect survey data from 500 PAIRS of ONG/RC Veterans and their civilian supervisors at 3 time points: Baseline, 6 months, 12 months

3. Collect Family Daily Diary data from subgroup of veterans and spouses

4. Develop and administer a Veteran Supportive Supervisory Training (VSST) to civilian supervisors
Family Study: Daily Diary

• Goal: To better understand issues faced by veterans and their families
• Data collected daily over two weeks via a web based survey
  • Examining daily experiences that impact health, well-being and reintegration
  • Target is 180 veterans and spouses recruited from larger study participants
Study Design: *Randomized Control Trial*

Recruit 500 Supervisor-Veteran Pairs and Collect Baseline Survey and Daily Diary Data

Random Assignment

Treatment Group – TRAINING

Collect Survey and Daily Diary Data and Assess Change: 6 months after data collection

Control Waitlist: TRAINING

Collect Survey and Daily Diary Data and Assess Change: 12 months after data collection

Years 2-3

Years 3-4

Years 4-5
## Timeline: 5 Year Plan

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<tr>
<th>Development</th>
<th>YEAR 1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<td>Focus Groups, Training Development, Development of Study Protocols</td>
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| Baseline Data                     | Collect Baseline survey and daily diary data (250 dyads Y1; 250 dyads Y2) |                        |                        |                        |                        |

| VSST Training - Treatment         | Implement to Treatment Group               |                        |                        |                        |                        |

| 6 mos Data                        | Collect 6 mos. survey and daily diary data |                        |                        |                        |                        |

| VSST Training – Waitlist Control  | Implement to Waitlist Control Group        |                        |                        |                        |                        |

| 12 mos Data                       | Collect 12 mos. Survey.                    |                        |                        |                        |                        |
So, what challenges should we expect from employers?
Potential Employer Resistance

A Fresh Perspective from Interviews to On the Job Accommodations

I don’t think they have the skills to do what we do here

I can’t figure out what they know how to do from reading their resumes

I need someone with more technical experience

My positions require certain certifications or credentials

Why bother? They’re just going to get called up anyway

We’re more focused on women & minorities right now

They don’t have a college education

I need someone who can lead, not just follow orders

I don’t have the budget for niche job sites or placement firms

I’m not risking bringing PTSD into my workplace
References


References (cont’d)


Our Team –

• Portland State University

• Leslie Hammer, Ph.D. - Principal Investigator, Project Oversight

• Krista Brockwood, Ph.D. – Research Associate and Project Manager

• Cynthia Mohr, Ph.D. – Co-Investigator and lead on Family Diary Sub-Study

• Sheldon Levy, Ph.D. – Senior Research Associate and Organizational Liaison

• Todd Bodner, Ph.D. – Co-Investigator and lead on Statistics and Research Design
Our Team –

– VA Medical Center/OHSU
  - Kathleen Carlson, Ph.D. – Co-Investigator, Veteran Specialist lead Epidemiologist
  - Ryan Olson, Ph.D. – Co-Investigator, Training Development, Behavior Tracking (OHSU)

– NWeTA (North West Educational Training Assoc.)
  - Kent Anger, Ph.D. – Co-Investigator, Training Development, Computer-Based Training

• In addition, a number of PSU Graduate Students and Undergraduate Students will be assisting on the project
Our Team-Consultants/Advisory Board

- Ellen Ernst Kossek, Ph.D., Purdue University
- Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth, Ph.D., Purdue University
- Robert Sinclair, Ph.D., Clemson University
- Thomas Britt, Ph.D., Clemson University
- Deborah Kashy, Ph.D., Michigan State University
- Paul Evans, U.S. Air Force; Air National Guard
- LTC Dennis McGurk, Ph.D., Chief, RTO, Walter Reed Army Institute for Research (WRAIR)
- Julie Merrill, M.S., Research Psychologist, WRAIR
- Brig Gen (Ret) Bill Doctor, Chairman Emeritus, Oregon Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve-ESGR
- Gary Dominick, M.S., State Veteran’s Program Coordinator
- Col. David Greenwood, Oregon National Guard
- LTC, Chaplain, Daniel Thompson, Oregon National Guard
- COL, Chaplain, Terry Larkin, Oregon National Guard
- LTC Tim Deckert, Oregon National Guard
Questions?

THANK YOU!