

DOT MIL DOCS
DMD 91 - RON HORNE TAP

Q: Welcome and thanks for tuning in. You're listening to Dot Mil Docs, the military health system's official podcast. I'm Russell Carlson. And it's Thursday, December 31st, 2009. It's our last episode of 2009. And we at the military health system want to wish you a healthy, safe and happy new year. Our guest this week is Ron Horne, Deputy Director for the Transition Assistance Program also known as TAP. TAP services are provided for a successful transition back to civilian life. Mr. Horne, welcome to Dot Mil Docs.

A: Thank you, very much. I'm delighted to have been invited to participate in your program.

Q: Sure. Well, we're happy to have you here. So let's get started by just talking about what the DOD Transition Assistance Program is.

A: The Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program began in fiscal year '92. It was passed in the fiscal year '91, National Defense Authorization Act. The initial program was designed to provide information on benefits, resources and services that service members who were eligible could take advantage of prior to leaving active duty.

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This was to help them to learn about their benefits and support information once they returned to wherever they're going to go back home to. Once they left active duty, as most people know, many military, especially enlisted personnel, but many officers we well, go back to their home of record where they may have enlisted when they first join the military. In some parts of our country, there may or may not be a military installation infrastructure there. So the idea of the program was to make them aware of those support systems by other fellow agencies who were partners with us in this whole program.

We are trying to ensure that their transition from active duty back to the civilian community is a smooth one. It's a seamless one. I will say that the program is not just a DOD program. The three big players are the Department of Defense, the Department of Labor and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Q: [inaudible question]

A: It really is. Actually, it is not ... it is truly an interagency partnership among those three. And we also have an agreement with the Department of Homeland Security

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because of Coast Guard personnel who are also entitled to the Transition Assistance Program. Of course, they receive theirs through DHS, not DOD. But the Coast Guard program manager for TAP, which is our acronym for the Transition Assistance Program, does sit on a group. We have a meeting. We try to meet once a quarter with the program managers with each of the services. And we meet a second time with what we call a TAP steering committee.

And the TAP steering committee consists of representatives from DOD, the Department of Labor, Veterans Affairs and the military services and the Coast Guard. The program is very unique. We sort of break it down into five pieces. The first piece is required for all separating service members. And by separating, I'm talking about anybody who leaves active duty, whether they're separating with less than twenty years or a person retiring with twenty years or more.

For the active duty member, they are required to get what is called pre-separation counseling. And that is an overview, a very general overview, of about fourteen topics that Congress mandated we address in counseling or coaching

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our service members before they leave active duty. During the interview process or during that session ... I shouldn't call it interview process. But during that counseling session, the member can ask for more information on a given topic. Let's say the counselor is talking about education. And let's say they're explaining to them they're eligible for Montgomery GI bills based on them paying into the post ... this is the pre-9/11 GI bill. Under the post-9/11, of course, there is no payment.

But the counselor would give them very basic information on the 9/11 GI bill. And for those who didn't cross over, the pre-9/11 GI bill. If the member wants more detailed information that goes beyond the knowledge and scope of that counselor, they will then refer them to a subject matter expert on the installation. Usually the education center on all education areas. And they will do a follow-up appointment with someone at the education center. And that person will answer all of the more in-depth detail questions.

And that's true for any category that's on what we call our checklist. To carry out pre-separation counseling, there's

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a checklist for the active duty service member. And there's a separate checklist for demobilizing National Guard and reservists. And the counselor walks through that checklist with the member, explains each topic. And there are blocks on the form where the member can say, yes, I want more information. Or no they don't. If they say, no, they don't, the counselor then goes onto the next topic.

That is mandatory. And pre-separating counseling is required for us to do no later than ninety days before a member's separated if we know that they are an anticipated loss. Those service members who are unanticipated losses, somebody who may be processed out of the service due to medical reasons that was unexpected, we consider those unanticipated losses. And we have to perform pre-separation counseling as soon as possible before they leave active duty. But we're not required to do it within that ninety day window.

The other components of the Transition Assistance Program are really conducted by our partners. The Department of Labor does a two and a half day employment workshop. And they address everything from resume writing to cover

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letters, dress for success, how to conduct job searches, how to conduct job searches using the Internet. They cover a gamut of topics. And the service member is able to get a baseline start on looking for employment through that workshop. That's voluntary. If the member asks to go, we certainly hope the commanders and senior non-commissioned officer leadership in the unit releases them to go. But that is not mandatory by law.

The third component is what we call the VA benefits briefing. That too is voluntary. The member gets to learn about all the VA benefits that they may be entitled to. Let me emphasize may. The purpose behind the pre-separation counseling is to get the member to enroll in the VA benefits class that will take place on that installation. And they setup a schedule twelve months out based on history. And so they know that let's say one installation, they may have two VA briefing sessions a month. Another installation may have one a month. Some very small installations only have maybe less than five people a year. They may only do a VA briefing once a quarter. But that is worked out at the local level with

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the local installation transition manager. And the regional VA director who sets up the schedule.

At any rate, once they get scheduled for the VA briefing, they'll go back and do that briefing on the installation with a VA member. VA provides the staff and all the materials connected with that particular briefing. And then those members who are leaving the military with a service connected disability, they are entitled to go to another briefing. And it's called DTAP. And that stands for the Disabled Transition Assistance Program. Those members are able to learn about the potential programs and benefits they may be entitled to based on their ratings from VA for disability ratings.

And the reason I keep using the word maybe, until the service member actually applies for a benefit and is adjudicated, one can't really say that they are eligible to receive the benefit. They are definitely eligible to apply. And we can do enough pre-work in the counseling session to pretty well be assured that they will qualify for something. But they won't know any of that until they actually submit their application for a VA benefits

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briefing ... benefit. Let me correct myself, VA benefit. And until the VA system processes that application and adjudicates it, then and only then does the member know for sure if they are going to receive that benefit.

Q: And that's because DOD has no ... we have no sway over VA and what they decide.

A: No, absolutely not. Now, there are certain ... so those members who maybe leaving the service due to a disability, some members may be entitled to certain DOD benefits. And they will be informed about that by their military service. For example, those who maybe processing out of the service maybe entitled to ... let me give you this example. A person who is involuntarily being separated, they're being separated not because they want to, but something else has occurred, they are entitled to 180 days of TriCare if there is a TriCare provider near where they live or a military treatment facility. That doesn't apply to voluntary separatees. So a person with a normal separation date who decides they are ready to move on and do something else in their life, they're not entitled to 180 day medical benefit. But those who are involuntarily separated are.

Q: So they get those 180 days after separation.

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A: After separation. Also involuntary separates are entitled to two years of commissary and post exchange benefits. Again, all that occurs after they separate. The flip piece ... and when I say the flip piece, I've already talked about pre-separation counseling, the Department of Labor Employment Workshop is part two. The VA benefits briefing is part three. DTAP is part four. I like to describe those as more or less formal type presentations of briefings. It's interactive in a classroom environment. Or it's one-on-one counseling. But when those four core components have been completed, the member then returns to the installation transition office. And from that point on, all the assistance that's given to them is one-on-one counseling.

So, let's say they finish as much of the resume as they can finish. They still need to do work on it. Then go back to that transition office and that transition counselor will assist them in whatever they need help on in finalizing their resume. So that they can begin to put it out to compete for getting a job interview. If they need more one-on-one assistance on medical benefits information or

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how to access the Internet once they're home, the counselor will assist them on that.

Q: Is this a counselor who would be assigned to them? Or could this be a team of counselors working with them?

A: It varies by service and installation. Most transition officers ... and I use the word transition as a generic term. For example, the Army calls their program Army Career and Alumni Program or ACAP. So they will send a person to an ACAP center to get these services. The Navy sends theirs to their fleet and family support center. Same services, different group of counselors. Counselors maybe in uniform. They maybe several employees. They maybe contractors. So basically, they get a counselor based on when they either work in or schedule themselves for an appointment.

I would generally say the services do their best to try to make sure that if they start working with one counselor, that's who they work with until they actually leave active duty. But sometimes that can't be guaranteed because of workload. And some of those counselors do other duties beyond just transition. But for the most part, the installations do their utmost best to ensure that the

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member works with the same counselor. Because again, once they start with that individual. They develop a sense of security. And the counselor develops a sense of understanding as to what that member is really trying to do to fulfill their aspirations once they leave the military.

And one point I'd like to make, I know a lot of news media talks about our veterans having difficulty finding employment. And certainly that is a true statement for a number of them. But not everyone of our separating service members is looking for employment. Many of them are using their Montgomery GI bill to go back to school full time. And so, I think it's important to note that education is a critical benefit that they've earned. And we strongly encourage them in this very high tech, high competitive employment environment, to use their education benefit. Because (1) they earned it. (2) That is one way to ensure that they're competing with their contemporaries who have been in education or academic institutions when they may have been on active duty.

Q: And the GI bill will expire after awhile for that member, right?

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A: The member GI bill expires ten years after they separate. I'm not the expert on the post-9/11 MGIB. I really can't say for certain if the ten year expiration applies to the post-9/11 NGIB. But the pre-/911 MGIB does expire ten years after the member separates. So that's basically the program. It's the five we call them components that the member can go through. They can get schedules for the membership briefing, the DTAP briefing or the employment workshop.

When they go through pre-separation counseling, that's when the counselor scheduled them for those follow-on benefits sessions with the appropriate federal installation. And again, the interagency, the Department of Labor and VA, they put those counseling sessions on at the military installation. The member doesn't have to go off base to get those services. Now, I will say this. In some areas around our military installations, the Department of Labor has we call them Department of Labor one stop career centers which really are outstanding.

And we try to encourage every service member as soon as they get relocated back home to go in and go to their

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career one stop center. Veterans get priority service at those centers. And those centers can do a whole lot to help them connect with employment much earlier than if they're out there sometimes struggling on their own.

Q: Now, where would those be located?

A: There are 3,200 throughout the entire United States. And a good source to locate where they are located, as well as any of the VA offices where they need to apply for any of their VA benefits, is on the official Department of Defense website which is called TurboTAP. And the website is, of course, [www.turbotap](http://www.turbotap.org) ... all one word, not upper/lower case sensitive ... dot org, .org.

Q: www.turbotap.org.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: That website is a gateway to all the information that they're getting in all of these counseling sessions. And it serves as an augmentation to what they are getting in the classrooms or in the 101 counseling sessions. And the website is organized with a component for employment. There's a component on the website for all the VA information. There are guides for the active duty and National Guard. And it's organized in the same format as

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the pre-separation counseling checklist that's done for both active duty, Guard and reserve.

So both of those documents work like an outline or roadmap. And they can go to any of the chapters in the guides and look up any information regarding the benefits or resources. There are hyperlinks within the guide that they can click on and don't have to come out of it. And any of the resources that have a 1-800 number where they can call up, those are also listed in the guides as well. It is a wealth of information.

Q: So how does the program actually work? Let's say I was a service member and I'm due to separate. What kind of timelines am I talking about? How do I get involved?

A: What we encourage in terms of policy is that a person separating with a known separation date should start the transition process twelve months before separation.

Q: A full year.

A: A full year. Retirees should start 24 months before their known retirement date. And let's assume a retiree doesn't know their retiree date. I would say anyone that reaches the eighteenth year mark, which means that they're open for

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retirement, of course, at the twenty year mark, they should really go ahead and start the transition process.

Q: So even if you don't know if you're going to leave.

A: That's correct. Because it is a wealth of information. It is overwhelming when you wait to the last minute. And you're trying to cram all of this stuff in. Added to the stress. And there is normal stress in any transition. And I'm using transition more generically than just this program. But anytime a service member, even if they were TSing from one installation to another, I don't care how many times you do it, there's always a level of normal stress. There will be a level of normal stress when one is transitioning from active duty back to the civilian community.

And we're trying to get them started early enough. So they can plan to do things on a step-by-step timeline. On the turbotap website, there is an annex that actually has a timeline if you start the process 24 months or 12 months. And under each of those timelines, it will tell the member what they should accomplish 12 months to nine months. During the nine months to six months window, during the six month to 90 day window, the 90 day window to 30 day window

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and in 30 days or less. It has prescribed everything the member should try to accomplish in those windows that makes up the entire program. And the same thing applies to a person leaving ... that's retiring with 24 months left on active duty.

Now, that's the timeline. But here's how the program works. The military departments have transition offices at approximately 215 military installations around the world. The installations will contact their personnel officers. And they get what we call a loss roster. Who is leaving my installation over the next 12 months? Who is leaving my installation over the next 180 days? They then contact the units and tell the units these service members are scheduled to leave the service. You need to get them to come in and schedule themselves for pre-separation counseling. So we can begin the TAP process.

And then the members get scheduled to go into that office to do that. And, of course, once they're there, the member is then carried through pre-separation counseling. And they get informed about attending the other workshops that's provided for them.

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Q: All the steps we talked about earlier.

A: All the steps we talked about earlier. And so, as you can see, let's say a member is leaving the service 1 July of 2010. And they did just starting 1 ... let's say next week, the 4th of January. Well, they've lost almost eight months, close to six months, of getting things done. So their twelve month window now is squeezed into six months. And so, let's say they're going in January. Let's say a lot of people schedule themselves let's say at Fort Hood, Texas before the holidays to go into the classes at the beginning of the year.

It is conceivable that the classroom maybe booked up through January and part of February. So the earliest that member maybe able to get into an employment workshop could be March. Well, now you're looking at the window getting really narrow. So if you start thinking about how much has to be done, twelve months is not that much time. and if you think about the fact that on top of all of this, the member's still trying to get their family, if they're married, packed, relocated. You know, they have to make decisions on am I going back to my home of record?

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Am I going to relocate to another part of the country? Am I familiar with that part of the country and its job market? Do I know if there's TriCare if I'm retiring? Is there a TriCare provider within the proximity of where I'm retiring? There are a number of questions they have to ask themselves and research they must do. So they can make an informed decision.

Q: The earlier the better.

A: The earlier the better. So basically, they go through these sessions. That's how the program works. Spouses of transitioning service members are eligible for employment assistance. That's one of the requirements of our law and our policy. And so a spouse of a transitioning service member who's separating or being discharged can also get employment assistance through the transition office or the Army ACAP office for any of the services.

Let me make one point about the use of the services. We have reciprocity among all of our services. So if an Air Force person lives closer to an Army installation versus works there, that Army installation will let them go through their transition program. Because the core program is different for everybody. On a joint bases. Let's say

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the primary service on a joint bases Air Force, every service member on that base that's leaving the service can use the Air Force Transition Office. We do not make a service member go to their own sister service for transition.

Q: It makes it easier on them.

A: We want to make it as easy as possible. So the services exercise this wonderful sense of reciprocity with each other. They want the member to go to the transition office that's most convenient for them. And the level of service and quality is absolutely outstanding. It's all three. I guess if I get frustrated, it's when I look at number and somebody doesn't go to some of the free workshops. I understand that they feel they don't need them. But many times, they don't know certain things that that workshop or that counseling session will give them.

So I wish they ... especially on the VA side, everybody needs to go to the VA benefits briefing. And if you definitely don't have a job guaranteed to you before you leave the service, you need to sit through this Department of Labor employment workshop.

Q: And what about VA disability claims?

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A: During the VA overall briefing, which is a big briefing, you are briefed ... you are told about the claims process. But that's where the DTAP program kicks in. You really get an in-depth briefing on the vocational rehabilitation program. Which is in another whole new program for those leaving with a disability. But you will also be told about the claims process by the pre-separation counselor. VA has two programs that we are really pushing. We call them the pre-discharge program.

The first one is the benefits delivery at discharge. We use the acronym BDD. Any member who has 180 days left on active duty should apply for the disability program, file their claim under the disability program. But the criteria's as follows. They must have a known separation date. They can only apply for it as early as 180 days. And they can't apply for it any later than sixty days left on active duty. If they meet that criteria, the VA will schedule them for a single joint examination. They only get one examination.

They turn in all of their health records. And VA normally gets that claim adjudicated within 45-60 days after the

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member has left active duty. So they know what their rating is and if they are getting an entitlement, they will start getting that entitlement very shortly.

Q: This is regardless of whether they think they have any kind of ailments or illness or injury.

A: We think if they think they have an ailment or illness, they need to file the claim. Let the VA system work. If they don't, they've lost nothing. But if they do, they may be entitled to a benefit payment that can start as early as sixty days after they leave active duty versus wait until you leave active duty. Now you're going through the administrative burden of my record's got to be found at some records holding center. They've got to be sent to the VA office. I've got to send my application to the VA office.

I might not do it until six months after I leave active duty. So all of a sudden, a claim that could have been processed before you left active duty, you could now be out there six months to a year trying to get that process done. And VA wants members to do it sooner, not later.

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The second program for those who can't get it done or don't meet that criteria is called the Quick Start Program. They can file their claim up until one day before leaving active duty. But most likely, they cannot get the ... they can't get the examination done in such short time. So they have to go home and then get the examination done. And obviously, that means that's going to take them longer. But even the Quick Stop Program gets claims processed faster than the traditional legacy system that has been going on for years in VA. So we are really encouraging any service member who is going before a medical evaluation board, a fiscal evaluation board, you should be processing your VA application before you leave active duty.

Q: Okay. Now, I know that there's also a disability evaluation system. It's a pilot program that's in effect?

A: Yes.

Q: How does this integrate or not integrate with that?

A: The disability evaluation system pilot is only at selected installations. If a person is referred to the DES pilot by the physician, then that is used in lieu of the DBD or Quick Stop Program. It is also an accelerated adjudication of one's disability and validation of their disability claim.

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Q: Okay. So you'll know because your physician will basically tell you.

A: That is correct. First of all, the DES pilot is not worldwide. And so it's not at every installation. But you know your physician, your medical staff, will refer you to the DES pilot. And once you're in DES pilot, that system is what you ... the member files their claim in versus the DBD program or the Quick Stop Program.

Q: Okay. Now, is there any difference for the Guard or reserve service members?

A: No. I would say there's not a difference. The challenge is, of course, if a National Guard or reservist has been activated, getting all of their records is one of the major challenges. If the member has their most up to date medical records intact and can get their hands on them. Because that's critical for the evaluation. But in terms of them applying for the program, there's no difference. I will say this. So the National Guard and reserves are not misled. Those that are demobilizing at the demobilization site, we know it's impossible for them to file their claim under BDD. Because they're already beyond the sixty day window when they get back from the war theater.

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They can file under Quick Start. But the chances are almost zero that they're going to be able to get the application at the demo site, fill it out, make a cop of their records and turn it in. Those who are on active duty who are recovering, those are the ones that can certainly file under BDD, Quick Start or they may be referred under the DES pilot. But if a National Guardsman, person or reservist returns home, they should immediately contact the regional VA office which might not be close to them. But they do it by phone. And they will get them started on processing their claim application immediately.

Q: So it sounds like this whole transition program is a very formal process. And the key is to get on it early.

A: It is a formal process that has great flexibility built into it. And when I say a formal process, you know, I can lay it out the five components. Here's what happens. People's lives don't fall into those neat little boxes.

Q: Right.

A: So my recommendation to any service member is to go visit your transition or ATAP office. For the Navy, it starts with what they call their command career counselor. The command care counselor in the Navy does the mandatory pre-separation and counseling. And what that sailor leaves the

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pre-separation counseling session, they get scheduled for the other core formal pieces at their fleet and family support center. But, yes. It really is. It sounds formal. It's very flexible. We also provide transition for personnel that are incarcerated, that are still on active duty. Because the law says we do pre-separation counseling and we do transition. It did not stipulate the type of discharge. As long as you're on active duty, the services still have to meet their obligation.

Q: Okay. So no matter who you are, while you're leaving.

A: That's correct. The other area I would like to address very briefly is wounded, ill and injured. The core program applies to everyone of them. They get nothing less. Actually, they get more. There are many other programs that have been stood up to assist our wounded, ill and injured. For example, we have the recovery care program. A service member with a 20 percent or less disability, who may or may not return to active duty will be assigned, will be assigned what is called a recovery care coordinator.

And that coordinator will assist them through their whole transition process. To include getting them over to the transition office to begin transition. Even though they

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may end up returning back to duty. We think that's a good thing. They've lost nothing. They've learned something about the process. And they end up going back to active duty if that's their choice.

We also have several recovery coordinators who work for the Department of Veterans Affairs. But they are generally located in medical treatment facilities. Those are for service members who are most likely not going to return to active duty. And their disability will start at thirty percent and higher. Again, those coordinators, those individuals, will try to help pull together all the different programs to ensure that the member can develop what we call a comprehensive transition plan. And so if their area of emphasis is my house needs to be modified, they need to get the VA to make sure they qualify for the whole modification benefit.

Q: Okay. We are going to take a quick break for the Dot Mil Docs Health Beat, news and information from the military health system. When we come back, we'll talk more with Mr. Horne about the future of TAP and how technology will play a key role in its development.

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MS. ANN GORDON: Dot Mil Docs health beat. Members of the Armed Forces are strong, healthy and ready to accomplish their mission, a survey of their health related behaviors has revealed. Defense Department officials have announced the final results of a 2008 survey of health related behaviors among active duty military personnel. Active duty Coast Guard personnel were included in the survey's cohort for the first time since the series of surveys began in 1980, providing the first comprehensive look on all active militaries.

On Thanksgiving Day, doctors from Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the University of Miami collaborated to perform the first pancreas islet cell transplant ever. Twenty-one year old Air Force Senior Airman Trey Profurio was shot three times in the back by an insurgent in Afghanistan, leaving him with a pancreas injured so severely that it had to be removed. The Walter Reed surgical team caring for Profurio put together a plan to ship the damaged pancreas to doctors at the University of Miami who harvested the cells that produce insulin. And immediately shipped them back to Walter Reed to be transplanted into Profurio's liver. Thanks to great civilian military medical

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cooperation, the procedure was successful. Profurio's blood tests show his harvested islet cells are functioning well. And he is gaining strength back every day.

Finally, a public service announcement for the Department of Defense and TriCare's sponsored education campaign, Quit Tobacco - Make Everyone Proud, won a 2009 AVA award. The AVA award recognizes outstanding achievement in audio visual materials and programs. The award winning PSA can be seen in the video section at www.youcanquittoo.org/campaign materials. To get help quitting tobacco, visit www.youcanquittoo.org. Back Dot Mil Docs Health Beat. For these stories and more, visit health.mil for the military health system, I'm Ann Gordon.

Q: Welcome back to Dot Mil Docs. Ron Horne, Deputy Director of the Transition Assistance Program is talking with us today about the program, what it is and how it impacts the lives of the service members. What could service members and their families expect from the Transition Assistance Program in the future?

A: We are rethinking and reshaping the program. We did an offsite not long ago in November. And our philosophy is

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going to switch. Versus transition being what we call an event where you leave the military, we want to make transition a process that begins when you are accessed into the military and it goes with you until internment. And so we are looking at how do we make that happen and implement it?

For example, a first term service member who decide to leave the service, at what point should we stop making sure they understand their career aspirations? Whether it's sustained in military leave, when should we make sure they have a clear understanding of their education benefits? Should we make sure they understand financial planning? Because you need to understand how the financial planning system works, whether you're leaving in three years, six years, ten years, twenty years or thirty-five years.

Q: So the earlier the better.

A: The earlier the better. Of course, the longer you stay, the more sophisticated your financial planning and readiness maybe. But early on, you really want to make sure you understand some basics. You want to understand the TSP program if you're paying into it. You shouldn't be

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learning about those things twelve years after you've been paying into it. Or you just get your LES. And there's something on the LES that tells you. You really need to understand it at the very beginning.

At the key points throughout your military life cycle, we need to either conduct some kind of refresher or give you tips on here's a transition tip for you based on where you are in this military life cycle. As a mid-careerist, maybe you need a tip on comparing your military salary to a civilian counterpart salary. So if you leave the military after twelve years, you know the kind of money you need to make to maintain your quality of life. You don't want to find that out once you decide you're leaving the service.

So we're looking at transitioning becoming part of your military life cycle throughout the process, realizing that as you end your career, you would get a heavier dose of it. But most of it you should be familiar with. The other thing that we're looking at in the transition program is finding ways to leverage technology. So that members can use all the technological tools that's available to them. On the linear[?] generation is really not the type of

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generation that really absorbs information in a classroom environment, listening to PowerPoint presentation.

Q: Right.

A: That is not a kid who gets PowerPoint presentations while sitting in a classroom. They have grown up in a different technological world than some of us baby boomers grew up in. So using Facebook, using Tweeter, using text messages, all of those things we are now looking at how do we make those things work for us in helping our members with their transition?

Q: So you're helping bring social media and the other media sources that that demographic uses into the program?

A: Yes, we are. And we kicked that off right after our offsite, David Dubois, our Director of Operations here at the Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Office started a transition Facebook. So Facebook for DOD TAP is up and alive and running.

Q: Oh, so you're there.

A: And anyone that has a Facebook account, I strongly encourage them to go onto Facebook, TAP Facebook, and see all the wonderful information that's already out there for them.

Q: All right.

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A: And that's active duty, National Guard, for service, spouses and any of our wounded, ill and injured.

Q: Okay. We'll get a link to that on health.mil too.

A: Thank you, very much. That would be greatly appreciated.

Q: Absolutely.

A: So in addition to those things, we are also looking at where do we need to make changes in policy and legislation? Where do we develop performance standards? Because we need to start measuring how well we are doing with this program. And we need to make sure we are fulfilling our responsibilities for accountability to the taxpayers. And so, we are working very hard to develop some very concrete performance based measures. So that we can start measuring how we're doing. We can start seeing where there are gaps. Where do we need to make better enhancements? We have created a separate working group to help us with the transition program with members of the National Guards and reserves. That is brand new.

As an historical footnote, when the program was first created back in the early '90s, it was really designed for the active duty service member. It was part of the overall plan to help us draw down the force. But it was to be

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permanently left in place. It wasn't just a temporary program. But at that time, you know, we did not have this massive call up of our National Guard and Reserve.

Q: Right.

A: With the call up and the war, of course, we've had to change our whole direction of the program. And so now we make sure, we want to make sure, that in all of our planning, all of our thinking and all of our meetings, we have representation for the National Guard and reserve. In fact, Colonel Corey Lineman, from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, sits on the TAP steering committee and is a player in our TAP managers meeting where we meet. And he was a key player in helping us develop our offsite. And he was instrumental in recruiting representatives from the reserve and National Guard component.

So we think the future of TAP is bright. We think we have a long way to go. We have done some wonderful things. We have serviced several millions of people since 1991. But we feel TAP needs to be designed and developed in a way that when the member needs it, that's when it's there for them.

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Q: Okay.

A: And that's a critical shift versus a member walking into a brick and mortar building and getting services. We think we can offer all of it. For those who are more comfortable going to a facility on a base, we want to make sure that's in place. For those members like our National Guard and reservists and many of our overseas service members who are at remote and isolated sites and don't have that installation infrastructure or brick and mortar support system, we want to make the transition program as accessible and available to them as the person who is at, on or near a military installation. Total access is the direction we want to go.

Q: Well, Mr. Horne, this has been a valuable and in-depth discussion on the Transition Assistance Program. And I want to thank you so much for speaking with us today.

A: And I want to thank you very much for this wonderful opportunity to share the program with the listening audience.

Q: Absolutely.

A: Thank you.

Q: That does it for us this week on Dot Mil Docs. The website that Mr. Horne was talking about again is www.turbotap.org.

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Join us next week when Dot Mil Docs returns on a Thursday with a visit from Colonel Charles Engel of Walter Reed Medical Center. He'll discuss the deployment health continuity of care for mental health that heals the wounded and builds their trust. Until then, see you on health dot mil.

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