



## Agenda

### WEDNESDAY, August 7

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7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Exhibitor Check-in & Set-Up | Independence Foyer

*Breakfast on your own*

7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Hospitality Desk: Registration Check-in | Independence Foyer

Pick up your name badge for the U.S. Department of Labor Veteran Employment & Training Service Sessions & the Veterans Conference

8:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. U.S. Department of Labor VETS Sessions

**NOTE:** These sessions are for state workforce agency staff only. This includes DVOPs, LVERs, Consolidated Staff and JVSG Coordinators. **Registration & Name Badge are required to attend. SPACE is LIMITED**

8:30 a.m.- 9:45 a.m.

**Listening Session with U.S. Department of Labor VETS & NVTI**

- **Hannah R. Toney**, Ed.D, Director, Custom Learning Solutions, Management Concepts
- **Maria Temiquel**, Director, Grants & Training, Veterans Employment & Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor

10:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

**Listening Session with U.S. Department of Labor VETS & NVTI**

- **Hannah R. Toney**, Ed.D, Director, Custom Learning Solutions, Management Concepts
- **Maria Temiquel**, Director, Grants & Training, Veterans Employment & Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor

11:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

**Exhibit Showcase**

| **Independence Foyer**

**Lunch on your own.**

12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

**Opening Ceremonies**

| **Independence Ballroom**

**Welcome to the 11th Annual NASWA Veterans Conference**

**Lori Adams**, Senior Policy Director, National Association of State Workforce Agencies

**Sarah Morrissey**, Employment Services Bureau Director, New Hampshire Employment Security, and Chair, NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee

**Presentation of the Colors**

**Joint Forces Color Guard of the Military District of Washington\*** (invited)

**Singing of the National Anthem**

**Dennis Wimer\***, Executive Director, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Sam Mitchell\***, WorkSource Administrator, Washington State Employment Security Department and Technical Vice Chair, NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee

**Welcome to Washington D.C.**

**Colonel Charlette Woodard\*** (USA Retired), Director, Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs, Washington DC

**Introduction of the NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee Members  
& Recognition of all Veterans in Attendance**

**Sarah Morrissey**, New Hampshire Employment Security

1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Opening Plenary

| Independence Ballroom

**Conference Welcome**

**Margarita Devlin**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations and Management, Veterans Employment & Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor

**NASWA Update**

Hear from NASWA President and CEO **Scott B. Sanders** as he provides a brief update of what has been happening at NASWA over the past year, with a focus on new initiatives, projects, and programs to benefit your state or territory and its residents.

Speaker:

**Scott B. Sanders**, President & CEO, National Association of State Workforce Agencies

**Partnership Update**

**Dennis Wimer\***, President, National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, and Director, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs

**A Word from our Platinum Sponsors**

**Sierra Health + Wellness**

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Plenary Session

| Independence Ballroom

**Keynote Address**

A Fireside Chat. Embracing the Challenge: Where the Beauty Lies?

**Merryl Tengesdal** is an American retired career military officer who is the first and only Black woman to fly the [United States Air Force's U-2](#) spy plane used for specialized high-altitude [reconnaissance missions](#). She is one of five women and only the fourth Black person (in 2004) to be in the U-2 program. She shares the plane's nickname, The Dragon Lady.

Moderator:

**Tiffany Daugherty\***, Head of Military & Veterans Affairs and Specialty Strategies, Johnson & Johnson

Speaker:

**Colonel Merryl Tengesdal\*** (USAF Retired)

**A Word from our Gold Sponsors**

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Networking Break

| Independence Foyer

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Plenary Session

| Independence Foyer

### Student Veterans

Speaker:

**Jared Lyon\***, National President & CEO, Student Veterans of America

### Mark Sanders Award Presentation

The 2024 Mark Sanders Award for Exceptional Service to Veterans, with special emphasis on Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment, recognizes the efforts of an entire one-stop career center or initiative whose efforts to serve Veterans go above and beyond the scope of mandatory service provision. This award is named in honor of Mark Sanders, who, during his distinguished career with the California Employment Development Department and in leadership positions with the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, was untiring in his efforts to promote excellence in services to Disabled Veterans. The workforce center in Sacramento, California, is named in his honor.

Presented by:

**Scott B. Sanders**, President and CEO, National Association of State Workforce Agencies, and  
**Sam Mitchell\***, WorkSource Administrator, Employment Connections Military Base Support, Washington State Employment Security Department and Chair, NASWA Mark Sanders Committee

This year's nominees include:

- **Alabama** - Enterprise Career Center, Enterprise, Alabama
- **Colorado** – Employment Services of Weld County
- **Florida** – CareerSource Palm Beach County
- **Iowa** – IowaWORKS Davenport American Job Center
- **Michigan** – Michigan Incarcerated Veterans In-Reach Program
- **North Carolina** – Onslow County NCWorks Career Center
- **Tennessee** – American Job Centers of the East Grand Region
- **Texas** – West Central Texas Jobs for Veterans State Grant Team, Abilene, Texas
- **Washington** - WorkSource Joint Base Lewis-McChord

Conference Adjourns for the Day!

## THURSDAY, August 8

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|                       |                                     |                       |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. | Exhibit Showcase                    | Independence Foyer    |
| 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Hospitality Desk                    | Independence Foyer    |
| 7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. | Hosted Breakfast                    | Independence Ballroom |
| 8:30 a.m. – 9:40 a.m. | Plenary Session: Welcome to Day Two | Independence Ballroom |

### I Just Wanted to Serve

**Clint Romesha** is a retired United States Army soldier who received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Battle of Kamdesh in 2009 during the War in Afghanistan while serving with Bravo Troop, 3d Squadron, 61<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. After leaving service in 2011, he moved to North Dakota to work in the oil and gas industry. When presented with the MoH in 2013, he was the fourth living recipient for the Global War on Terrorism. [Medal of Honor citation](#) | [Video](#)

Speaker:

**Staff Sergeant Clinton Romesha\*** (USA, retired)

### Veteran Business Owners: Pathway to Success

Learn about the amazing journey of the featured Veteran entrepreneurs and the resources they used to start and grow their businesses. Hear how they started their journey and the challenges and successes along the way.

Moderator:

**Stan Kurtz\***, Director, Policy & Engagement, US Small Business Administration

Panelists:

**Don Miller\***, Director, Veterans Business Outreach Center, Norfolk VA;

**Hyacinth Tucker\***, Owner, The Laundry Basket LLC;

**Donnell Johns\***, Owner & Founder, Veterans Grown America;

**Cynthia S. Kan\***, Executive Director, Operation Code

|                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 9:40 a.m. – 9:55 a.m. | Networking Break |
|-----------------------|------------------|

9:55 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.

**Breakout 1: Lafayette Park**

**Promising Practices – North Carolina: Promising Practices for Serving the Native American Veteran Population**

This presentation will examine the roles and responsibilities of North Carolina JVSG staff as they provide employment services to enrolled members of the specific tribe or enrolled members they serve. An enrolled member of the State recognized Lumbee Tribe located in Southeastern North Carolina in Robeson, Hoke, Cumberland, and Scotland Counties and an enrolled member of the Federally recognized Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians located in the Great Smokey Mountains of Western North Carolina in Haywood, Jackson, Swain, Cherokee, Graham, Clay and Macon Counties will be your guides through this process as they provide their unique perspective and experiences of working as Native American Veterans with Native American Veterans in their ancestral homelands. They will also explain the importance, flexibility, and cultural sensitivity that JVSG staff need to have and use when building these relationships and how only through a process of open and heartfelt listening do, they have an opportunity to be a part of something very special.

Presenters:

**Gerard Ball\***, Consolidated DVOP/LVER, North Carolina Department of Commerce

**Gary Jacobs\***, Consolidated DVOP/LVER, North Carolina Department of Commerce

**Promising Practices – Iowa: Why and How to Advocate for Veteran Resource Rooms**

This presentation will showcase the benefits of Veteran Resource Rooms, which are areas within and office or a service building that are reserved for veteran specific needs and wellness. They are oriented in layout, equipment, and staff with veterans in mind. In Iowa, these centers provide safe spaces for Veteran meetings and appointments, not only with the state JVSG staff, but also with Veteran service officers, and other center personnel. Veterans can use this space to conduct job searches, on-line interviews, work on their resume, and more. This approach significantly reduces duplication and repetition of services, and the spaces have become a hub for community partner meetings.

Presenters:

**Dakota Andrew\***, Veteran Career Planner, Iowa Workforce Development

**Sue Trobaugh\***, Veteran Career Planner, Iowa Workforce Development

**Breakout 2: Room F-G**

**What Makes a Great Story? Discover the power of personal stories and explore how to infuse it into your own work in this interactive StoryCorps workshop.**

Military Voices Initiative (MVI) at StoryCorps was launched in 2012 with the goal to record, preserve, and share the stories of veterans, service members, and their families to honor their service and sacrifice, amplify their stories, and let them know that we as a nation are listening. MVI interviews with veterans, active-duty

service members, or military families with their loved ones to discuss what matters most to them, and to archive these conversations for future generations to hear. Many of these conversations shed light on wide-ranging issues affecting veterans, including reintegration, education, mental health, and employment. In this workshop, we will share highlights from our Military Voices collection and dig into the how of StoryCorps, including best practices for listening and tips from our facilitators and producers to elicit great stories. Attendees will have the opportunity to know colleagues more deeply through discussion and practice listening and interview techniques that are applicable to their everyday lives and their work. Leave with the tools to contribute your own story to the growing archive.

Presenter:

**Charlie Palumbo\***<sup>Λ</sup>, Manager, Military Voices Initiatives, StoryCorps

### **Breakout 3: Room H-I**

#### **Life beyond addiction for our Veterans: How to talk to a Veteran in crisis and early intervention to provide access to treatment.**

Veterans are the backbone of our nation, having sacrificed their lives, time, and often their mental well-being to protect our freedoms. Their experiences shape them in unique ways, and it is crucial we support them through their challenges as they transition back to civilian life. By collaborating with resources across the United States, such as Sierra Health and Wellness's Wellness for Warriors Program, Veterans Affairs hospitals, community mental health centers, and nonprofit organizations, we can ensure veterans have access to the tailored treatment and support they deserve, facilitating their journey toward recovery and resilience.

Presenters:

**David Burke**, Co-Founder & Chief Marketing Officer, Sierra Health + Wellness

**Prairie Francia**, Chief Marketing Officer, The Elijah House Foundation

### **Breakout 4: Room D-E**

#### **From Street Kid to CEO – A Veteran's Non-Traditional Journey Into Entrepreneurship**

Join Rob Arndt, CEO & Founder of [BufferSprings](#) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Operated Small Business owner, for an inspiring presentation titled "From Street Kid to CEO: A Veteran's Non-Traditional Journey into Entrepreneurship." Rob will share his remarkable journey from humble beginnings as a "street-kid" in one of the poorest zip codes in the U.S. to serving in the military, discovering his passion for sales and connecting people, and ultimately founding BufferSprings. Through personal anecdotes and insights gained from years of military and post-military experience, Rob will delve into the challenges and triumphs that shaped his path to entrepreneurship. He will discuss key milestones, lessons learned, and the expertise gained along the way. In addition to sharing his story, Rob will provide a practical framework for veterans and military spouses looking to carve out successful careers or start their own ventures. This framework includes the Japanese

"Ikigai" concept, strategies for market research, identifying problems and solutions, validating business.

Presenter:

**Rob Arndt\***, Founder and CEO, BufferSprings

### **Breakout 5: Franklin Square**

#### **The Veterans Consortium: Legal Services for Veterans**

The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program has offered free legal representation to Veterans, their families and survivors at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) since 1992. In 2017, they began a Discharge Upgrade Program, which offers legal representation for Veterans who received an other than honorable discharge. The Women Veterans Legal Assistance Program began in 2020, as did their Veterans Naturalization Assistance Program.

Presenters:

**Colleen Miller**, Deputy Director of Volunteer Outreach, Education & Placement, Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program

**Chesley Roberts**, Deputy Director Legal Assistance Programs, Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program

### **Breakout 6: Farragut Square**

#### **Recent Research on Servicemembers' Military Transitions and Civilian Jobs**

In this panel discussion, RAND researchers will present findings from three of their recently-released research reports: Federal Programs to Strengthen Military-to-Civilian Employment Transition: Education Programs Dominate but Receive Limited Scrutiny (Wenger, Kleykamp, Roer, Kubasak, and Hubble), Increasing Sustainability of Veteran-Serving Employment Focused Nonprofits: Findings from a Mixed-Methods Study (Kleykamp, Rinderknecht, Saba, Verastegui, and Williams), and How Working Conditions in Civilian Jobs Can Affect Veterans' Health and Well-Being (Whitley and Apaydin). After sharing the results, researchers will engage in discussion with the audience about the implications of their findings for state workforce agencies.

Panelists:

**Kayla Williams\***, Senior Policy Researcher, RAND Corporation

**Meredith Kleykamp**, Senior Social Scientist, RAND Corporation

**Eric Apaydin**, Policy Researcher, RAND Corporation

**11:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. Breakout sessions**

### **Breakout 1: Lafayette Park**

#### **Promising Practices – Texas: Helping Veterans Starts Here**

Since 1927, the mission of the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), a state agency, has been to advocate for and provide superior service to veterans that will significantly improve the quality of life for all Texas veterans,



their families, and survivors. The TVC does this by providing eight unique services throughout the state. Including the Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA) grant program. The TVC awards reimbursement grants to nonprofit organizations, veteran service organizations, and units of local government that provide direct services to veterans, dependents, and surviving spouses. The FVA grant programs and services provided by grant funding are defined periodically by a statewide veteran needs assessment study. The Texas Lottery is the single most significant source of funding for the FVA generating millions with \$2 Veterans scratch off tickets. Other funding sources include individual donations, Driver's License and ID Card registration/renewal forms, License to Carry, and hunting and fishing licenses. The Fund for Veterans' Assistance has awarded over \$168 million to organizations across Texas to help over 300,000 veterans and their families since 2009.

Presenter:

**Elaine Zavala**, Director, Fund for Veterans' Assistance Grant Program, Texas Veterans Commission

### **Promising Practices – Virginia: Expanding the Transition Window (Soldier Recovery Unit/Wounded Warrior Regiment and TAP)**

Virginia formed a strong partnership with the Soldier Recovery Unit (SRU) at Ft Belvoir. The recovering soldiers began telling their friends and others transitioning service members about the care and service they were receiving regarding employment. That spilled over to the Wounded Warrior Regiment (Quantico) and other Transition Offices. Additionally, the idea to create a Veteran Employment Specialist sprung to life because not all Active-Duty personnel would transition to become Veterans served by a DVOP, but they would still needed help with employment and finding the AJC. Currently we provide weekly outreach to SRU/WWR units located statewide while also receiving referrals from them.

Presenter:

**Edward DuPass\***, Northern Regional Veterans Manager, Virginia Works (Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Employment)

### **Breakout 2: Room F-G**

#### **Unlocking the Power of Credentials: Strategies for Quality Selection**

This workshop explores the pivotal role of credentials in career advancement for active duty and transitioning service members, discussing the distinction between academic and alternative credentials, micro and stackable credentials, and employer demand for non-academic credentials. Participants will gain understanding of credential quality based on accreditation standards for personnel certification programs and DOD Credential Standards. Additionally, tools for informed credentialing choices, including platforms like COOL and insights from MilGears' Engage My Career, will be demonstrated.

Presenter:

**Dr. Amy Morys\***, Director of Client Delivery, Solutions for Information Design, LLC (SOLID)

### **Breakout 3: Room H-I**

#### **Partnering with the Department of Corrections to Assist Re-Entry Veterans**

An overview of the partnership efforts between two Washington state agencies to support Veterans who are incarcerated and within three months of releasing back into society. The goal is to connect these Veterans with a Disabled Veterans Case Manager who can help them apply for and secure employment. This work has evolved over two years' time: As a result, we are proud to share that all Veterans who are released from incarceration in Snohomish County get connected with their local Disabled Veterans Case Manager in WorkSource who will immediately help them engage in the job search upon their release back into society.

Presenters:

**John Cruz\***, Disabled Veterans Case Manager, Washington State Employment Security Department

**Andrew Parnell**, Corrections Specialist, Reentry Navigator Unit, Washington State Department of Corrections

#### **Breakout 4: Room D-E**

##### **VPL 05-24: A Discussion of JVSG Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

Excellent delivery of services to veterans through the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) starts with a shared understanding of who can be served and how JVSG staff collaborate with other Department of Labor-funded grant program staff in the 2,300 American Job Centers located throughout the country. Explore the roles and responsibilities of Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives with staff from the Department's own Veterans Employment and Training Service.

Presenters:

**Sarah Bierman\***, Deputy Director for Grants & Training, Office of National Programs, US Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service

**Rebekah Haydin\***, National Jobs for Veterans State Grant Lead, Office of National Programs, US Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service

#### **Breakout 5: Franklin Square**

##### **Workforce Outcomes for Military-Affiliated Job Seekers via EASY, CASUAL, VIRTUAL Collaboration with Strong Employers**

Hiring Veterans is a business imperative. "Civilian" companies across all sectors recognize this talent strength, resulting in military ready pathways evolving quickly. Join 50strong to discuss how and why employers are leaning into employment outcomes for military connected talent.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn the latest on how employers are approaching new military talent pathways.
- Create easy & free pathways for job seekers to engage with military talent leaders.

Presenter:

**Chantal DeWall\*^**, 50strong Operations Manager

## Breakout 6: Farragut Square

### Franchising 101: Go into Business for Yourself, But Not By Yourself!

Explore the Franchise Business Model and learn why franchises are great for Veterans, and why Veterans are great for franchising!

Presenter:

**Jimmy Weeks\***, VetFran committee member and founder, [www.coveryoursix.com](http://www.coveryoursix.com)

12:05 p.m. – 1:05 p.m.

**Hosted Lunch**

| **Independence Ballroom**

1:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Concurrent Workshop Sessions**

1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

**Breakout sessions**

## Breakout 1: Lafayette Park

### Entrepreneurship: How to Get Started

This will be a panel discussion moderated by Fiserv, featuring a member of the SBA, Dog Tag, the D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), and Hiring our Heroes. Through this discussion, participants will have the opportunity to hear from leaders in this space who will provide tips and resources to help them on their entrepreneurship journey.

Moderator:

**Meg Hendricks\*^**, VP Head of Military and Veterans Affairs, Fiserv

Panelists:

**Stan Kurtz\***, Director, Policy and Engagement, Office of Veterans Business Development, US Small Business Administration

**Brian Alvarado^**, Director, Military Spouse Programs, Hiring Our Heroes

**Meghan Ogilvie**, CEO, Dog Tag Inc.

**Barbara E. Carson\***, Managing Director of Programs and Services, D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)

## Breakout 2: Room F-G

### Recruit, Retain and Promote: Connecting Veterans to Employers

Our nation faces a critical shortage of skilled workers, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and an aging population. Veterans, despite low unemployment rates, struggle to secure fulfilling jobs due to employers' lack of awareness about their value and a structure to support them before and during employment. This presentation will provide participants with contemporary knowledge of employer training, diversifying recruitment methods, integration and onboarding, post-hiring support, and retention.

Presenters:

**Wendy Ann Lang**, President, Operation College Promise (OCP)  
**Vernon Taylor\***, President, Vernon Taylor Enterprises Alliance (VTEA)  
**Dallas Kratzner\***, President, Dallas Kratzner Consulting

### **Breakout 3: Room H-I**

#### **Serving Your Client Through Understanding: Military Cultural Competency**

This presentation will focus on the distinct features of military life that affect service members and their families and how understanding these features will help you better serve your client. Understanding military culture will help you build trust and effectively communicate with your client. Topics will include but are not limited to chain of command, value and norms, unique stressors, and veteran identity.

Presenters:

**Nancy Jones\***, Staff Attorney, Case Evaluation & Litigation Team, The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program

**Christopher J. Tyson\***, Partner at Duane Morris LLP

### **Breakout 4: Room D-E**

#### **HEAL\*ARIOUS: Using Humor for Improved Physical and Psychological Performance**

Learn about the most common cognitive distortions and how to leverage joke writing and laughter to improve your psychological performance. This session improves resilience by reducing anxiety, depression, and ultimately is a prevention measure for suicidal ideations and negative behaviors.

Presenter:

**Robin Johnson\***, LTC USA (Retired) & CEO Best Medicine Brigade

### **Breakout 5: Franklin Square**

#### **VA Education Benefits 101**

The Veterans Benefits Administration's Education Service will provide a VA Education Benefits 101 presentation to take a comprehensive look at the most used education benefits and what recent changes affect the Veteran customers. We will also cover special grant opportunities for eligible persons. As part of the overall education benefits, we will cover the educational and career counseling component that the VA offers and how it intersects with partners like the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG).

Presenter:

**Christopher Holtkamp\***, Management and Program Analyst, Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Service

### **Breakout 6: Farragut Square**

#### **Ready to Work – Our Journey Integrating Veterans in the Workplace**

The Municipal Alliance of Integrated Services (AMSI), a non-profit organization, brings training opportunities and employment services to citizens and employers in Puerto Rico. From 2022, AMSI administers HVRP funds,

through a competitive proposal. The organization impacts 35 homeless veterans in Puerto Rico annually with the purpose of reintegrating them into the workforce, while providing them with the necessary tools and services to eliminate the barriers that make reintegration difficult. The workshop aims to share the experiences AMSI teamwork has had impacting veterans, including strategies they have used, collaborative alliances, virtual job fairs that have worked for them, training activities, and service events in collaboration with allied entities. Also, how they have handled cultural, social, and geographical challenges.

Presenter:

**Anitza Marty-Alicea**, HVRP Manager, Alianza Municipal de Servicios Integrados (AMSI)

**2:30 p.m. -3:30 p.m.**

**Breakout sessions**

**Breakout 1: Lafayette Park**

**Promising Practices – Washington: Operation Military Culture: Serving Those Who Served through Empathy & Understanding**

Operation Military Culture (OMC) is an innovative approach to immersing customer-facing team members within the military culture. This presentation will explain the What, Why, How, and What's Next behind Central Sound Region's Operation Military Culture initiative. It will include information and perspectives from those involved in implementation and those who have participated in OMC. Please join us in learning about how leveraging our existing talent and resources strengthens our ability to serve the military community.

Presenter:

**Jo Ann Enwall**, Team Lead, Washington Employment Security Department, WorkSource Joint Base Lewis McChord

**Promising Practices – Oregon: Incorporating Peer Support Methodology in DVOP Practice**

Using a "Peer-centered" approach to DVOP practices leads to increased client engagement and more cases closed with positive outcomes. Workshop participants will learn what Peer Support is and is not, how it applies to DVOP role, and learn about successful outcomes using Peer Support methodology. All too often, IEP/IDP's are written from the DVOP's perspective and fail to consider the client's "lived experience." This means that the assumption becomes "the client should do what I would do." As peers, we can certainly sympathize, and sometimes empathize, with the client, and better understand the significant barriers they are facing. Using Peer Support methodology helps DVOPs create an IEP/IDP that is familiar to the client and creates "buy-in" to achieve success. When clients experience success, they can reflect on the work they have done and "own" their accomplishment.

Presenter:

**Tom Summers\***, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist, WorkSource Oregon

## **Breakout 2: Room F-G**

### **The National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI): Unlocking your Veteran Service Provider Superpowers with NVTI**

This session includes representatives of the National Veteran's Training Institute (NVTI) and will provide a comprehensive overview of NVTI's expanding Learning Ecosystem, including new and in-development learning opportunities. Participants will: (1) gain an understanding of how NVTI can support their work with veterans (2) gain knowledge of new NVTI resources and (3) share what they would like to see from NVTI next.

Presenters:

**Hannah R. Toney**, Ed.D, Director, Custom Learning Solutions, Management Concepts

**Brandon Webb\***, National Veterans Training Institute Lead, US Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service

## **Breakout 3: Room H-I**

### **Using SkillSet: No-cost Options to Support Transitioning Service Members and Veterans**

This session will feature a no-cost LER supporting Veterans using Artificial Intelligence to translate their skills to careers and recommend up-skilling. Understand how SkillSet can be personalized to serve Veteran-serving organizations and how this aligns with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, T3 and Education Design Labs Experience You, phase 2 initiative.

Presenters:

**John Kaiser\***, General Manager, SkillSet, AstrumU

**Mike McCorkendale\***, AstrumU Military Liaison

**Dr. Jim Martin\***, former Associate Dean, Dean of Academics and Chief Academic Officer of Army University and AstrumU Military Advisor

**Colin Reynolds**, Senior Education Designer, Education Design Lab

## **Breakout 4: Room D-E**

### **Empowering Veteran Transition: Unveiling the Student Veterans of America (SVA) Career Center**

Discover the transformative potential of the SVA Career Center in empowering veteran transitions into civilian careers. This groundbreaking initiative offers personalized career readiness and employment services tailored to the unique needs of student veterans. Join us to explore the comprehensive job board, engagement opportunities for employers, and tailored career support provided by the Career Center. Learn how integration with the SVA Success Hub drives data-driven impact and supports veteran success at every stage of their journey.

Presenters:

**Awilda Carozza\***, Employer Relations Coordinator, Student Veterans of America

**Chad McFarlane\***, Success Coach | Campus Relations Liaison, Student Veterans of America

### **Breakout 5: Franklin Square**

#### **Veterans Needed for America's Clean Energy Workforce**

This workshop will explain all of the opportunities available in the energy industry for those with military skills. It will connect participants with the industry's Troops to Energy Jobs initiative and explain how to use the program's MOS/NEC translator that translates military occupations specialties to careers in the energy industry, as well as how to access the tens of thousands of jobs that are available now and into the future, along with the many resources available to participants. Learn from and talk with Veterans who are now working in the industry and about the many different career opportunities in the industry.

Speaker:

**Rosa Schmidt**, Director of Veteran Programs, Center for Energy Workforce Development, Troops to Energy Jobs

### **Breakout 6: Farragut Square**

#### **Resources to Increase Employment and Financial Stability for Veterans with Disabilities**

Disabled Veterans may face obstacles related to employment. In this interactive session participants will explore different proven approaches to job search assistance, Discovery and Customized Employment for Veterans who experience multiple barriers to employment. In addition to employment, we all need clear and accurate information to secure our financial well-being. Financial education and resources will be shared to support financial stability for Veterans. The presenters will introduce the [Secure Your Financial Future – A Financial Toolkit for People with Disabilities, a comprehensive toolkit that empowers people with disabilities](#) throughout their employment journey. Presenters will provide a general overview of tax advantaged ABLÉ savings and investment accounts that can fund food, housing, education, employment and support services and other disability expenses. Effective January 2026, the ABLÉ Age Adjustment Act will increase the age of ABLÉ eligibility from “before age 26” to “before age 46.” This will expand the number of ABLÉ eligible individuals by an estimated six million people, including an additional one million veterans. An ABLÉ account can help to fund and make it easier for an individual with a disability to find and retain competitive employment.

Presenters:

**Sarah Loizeaux**, Subject Matter Expert on Inclusive Career Pathways, LEAD WIOA Policy Development Center, National Disability Institute

**Jody Ellis**, Director, ABLÉ Resource Center, National Disability Institute

**Timothy Elliott\***, Program Outreach Specialist, Office of Home and Community Living, New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities

**3:30 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.**

**Networking Break**

4:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

**Breakout sessions**

**Breakout 1: Lafayette Park**

**One Tool, Many Applications: How the NLx Makes a Difference in Veterans Employment**

Learn how the NLx partnership works for you every day. Join the NLx team to receive a demonstration of workforce system tools supporting Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs), Disabled Veteran Outreach Specialists (DVOPs), Consolidated staff, business service teams, state labor exchange staff, and other workforce development partners throughout the U.S. Listen to stakeholders discuss the impact these partnership-generated resources have had for Veterans, military spouses, and Transitioning Service Members (TSMs) in their communities.

Moderators:

**Lori Adams**, Senior Policy Director, National Association of State Workforce Agencies

**Mike Witt**, Community & State Outreach Manager, DirectEmployers Association

Panelists:

**Kim Lott\***<sup>^</sup>, Community & State Outreach Administrator, DirectEmployers Association

**Shane Sawyer\***, Veteran Career Planner/DVOP, Iowa Workforce Development

**Tim French\***, Local Veterans Employment VER, Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry

**Breakout 2: Room F-G**

**Connecting with Veterans on the Transition Journey**

This session aims to address the complexities and nuances of transitioning from military to civilian life, spotlighting the diverse experiences of veterans and military spouses. Through a panel discussion, panelists will delve into personal narratives that highlight the nonlinear nature of this transition, the challenges faced—including imposter syndrome, isolation, and skill translation—and the supportive strategies that aided them.

Presenters:

**Jon Smyrl\***, Senior Customer Service Manager, SaraWorks

**Will Paige\***, Senior Consultant, Deloitte

**Breakout 3: Room H-I**

**Entrepreneurship and AI: Veterans and Spouses Thriving in the Age of AI**

Military service forges a powerful identity. Transitioning veterans and spouses face a unique challenge: reconciling their military selves with the AI-driven civilian world. This presentation proposes leveraging transferable skills and adapting skills to the new AI driven environment. Veterans, focusing on human strengths like leadership and critical thinking, can become AI integrators, leading the charge in AI adoption within companies or even launching their own AI-powered ventures. Spouses, masters of adaptation, can



excel in the flexible, remote work landscape fostered by AI. Embracing lifelong learning and building strong support networks are crucial for a successful identity shift and entrepreneurial advantage in the AI era.

Presenter:

**Wayne Robinson\***, Senior Director, Global Talent Management & Head, Executive Development, Moderna

#### **Breakout 4: Room D-E**

##### **Suicide Prevention: Overcoming Veteran Stigma**

Embark on a profound exploration of military life and the challenges confronting service members, veterans, and their families in the "Overcoming Veteran Stigmas" course. Gain a comprehensive understanding of military culture, delving into its unique mindset and the norms shaping their experiences. Explore sensitive topics like suicide prevention and the impact of misconceptions, alongside discussions on invisible wounds. Celebrate military diversity and learn to foster acceptance and support within the community. Join us on this transformative journey towards empathy and solidarity.

Presenters:

**Jennifer Prewitt\***, Lead Suicide Prevention Peer Specialist, Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs

**Donald Seese\***, Suicide Prevention Peer Specialist, Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs

#### **Breakout 5: Franklin Square**

##### **Emotionally and Mentally Safe: Fostering Well Being in the Workplace**

The "Emotionally and Mentally Safe: Fostering Well-being in the Workplace" presentation equips front line employees with tools to promote emotional safety. Participants learn to recognize and reframe negative language, distinguish between needs and feelings, and communicate effectively. They practice making clear requests and exploring stress management techniques. Through interactive sessions, attendees gain actionable steps to foster a mentally safe environment. The session empowers individuals to contribute positively to workplace well-being for themselves and their colleagues.

Presenter:

**Bill Stierle**, Subtext Solutions

#### **Breakout 6: Farragut Square**

##### **Going Above and Beyond; Honoring the Legacy of Mark Sanders**

This session will highlight previous recipients of NASWA's prestigious Mark Sanders Award, given each year to a state that exemplifies "going above and beyond" to serve the needs of Veterans with significant barriers to employment. Come to this session to learn more about their projects, what they have learned, and how you can incorporate their ideas into your state.

Moderator:

**Sam Mitchell\***, WorkSource Administrator, Washington State Employment Security Department

**Panelists:**

**Henry Lahti\***, Assistant State Coordinator/Intensive Service Coordinator, Alabama Department of Labor  
**Members of the NASWA Mark Sanders Subcommittee**

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

**Hosted Networking Reception**

| Independence Foyer

## FRIDAY, August 9

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7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

**Hosted Breakfast**

| Independence Ballroom

7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Exhibit Showcase**

| Independence Foyer

7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Hospitality Desk**

| Independence Foyer

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

**Plenary Session: Welcome to Day Three**

| Independence Ballroom

### **Creating Military Thriving™ Cultures and Communities - Changing the Narrative**

Shortly after incorporating, ZeroMils coined the phrase Military Thriving™ in response to growing trends in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors that created an environment that fell short in helping military and veteran connected families to thrive. In corporate America, a vast majority of companies use the terms “military friendly” or “military ready” to describe their cultures. Similarly, many nonprofits paint a picture that Veterans are barely “surviving” when a vast majority of us are thriving in the workplace and in society. Retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel and former national nonprofit leader, Kevin Schmiegel will talk about the importance of creating a Military Thriving movement that supports our military and veteran connected community and ensures the future viability of the all-volunteer force.

Speaker:

**Kevin Schmiegel\***, Co-Founder & CEO, ZeroMils

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

**Networking Break**

| Independence Foyer

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Closing Plenary Session**

| Independence Ballroom

### **Thank You, Next! The Private Sector's Role in Veteran Employment in an Age of Negative Unemployment**

Veteran unemployment is at historically low levels, causing many Fortune 500 companies to rethink – and reshape – their veteran hiring programs. This is the correct instinct, as veteran nonprofits, workforce agencies and veterans themselves have become more sophisticated about the transition from military to civilian life. At the same time, many companies have impressively organized and resourced infrastructures dedicated to helping veterans transition and thrive. How can we collectively leverage those systems to identify and solve new and ongoing challenges for transitioning veterans in the workplace?

Moderator:

**Laura Schmiegel\***, Senior Vice President, Strategic Partnerships, Orion Talent

Panelists:

**Ed Carr\***, Senior Director, Comcast NBCUniversal

**Chris Liakos**, Associate Director, Fair Employment Practices Compliance, EY

**Marcus Ohlenforst\***, Military & Diversity Workforce Strategist, USAA

### **From Combat to Comedy: Harnessing Strength and Humor in the Face of Adversity**

Speaker:

**Lieutenant Colonel Robin 'Phoenix' Johnson\*** (USA Ret), Therapeutic Humor Facilitator, Comedian, Veteran and Military Spouse

### **Final thoughts and closing**

Speaker:

**Sarah Morrissey**, Employment Services Bureau Director, New Hampshire Employment Security, and Chair, NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee

### **Conference adjourns – safe travels everyone!**

**See you next year!** Mark your calendars for **July 9-11, 2025**, at The Grand Hyatt in Washington DC.

\*Indicates individual is a Veteran, NG/Reservist, currently serving, or a military spouse. Please thank them for their service and ask how you can serve them!