

SHERRÈ ISAAC COLLIER, MANPOWER, PERSONNEL AND SERVICES DIRECTORATE,
AIR FORCE MATERIEL COMMAND

STATEMENT

OF

SHERRÈ ISAAC COLLIER

MANPOWER, PERSONNEL AND SERVICES DIRECTORATE
AIR FORCE MATERIEL COMMAND
WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

BEFORE THE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

HEARING

ON THE

STATE OF VETERANS EMPLOYMENT IN OHIO
THROUGH
THE AIR FORCE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE
AND HIRING PROGRAMS

DECEMBER 12, 2011

Senator Brown and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the military transition assistance and hiring efforts at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (WPAFB). As you know WPAFB is the largest single employer in the state of Ohio, and therefore WPAFB is uniquely positioned to provide assistance and resources to all military members (Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, Guard and Reserves) who are transitioning or separating from military service, and who may be seeking continued employment. Today we will share with you our experiences and the activities associated with

our Transition Assistance Program (TAP), the Wounded Warrior Program, and our hiring activities that include prior military service members.

TAP AT WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE

The WPAFB Airman and Family Readiness Center delivers and expands the TAP experience for transitioning military members through the following activities.

The TAP program provides “One-Stop-Shopping” service to over 800 transitioning members per year. Customers include Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps members from across the five-state region (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky and Western Pennsylvania). Services include individualized counseling, connections and referrals to local resources (to include the organizations at WPAFB, Department of Labor (DOL), Veterans Affairs (VA), and state Employment and Training services). Unique to Wright-Patterson is an onsite VA Transition Center which is located in the Base Medical Center.

The local TAP program includes annually 27, four-day transition seminars delivered in partnership with DOL, VA, Disabled American Veterans Association, and the American Legion. The sessions provide training on resume writing, mock interviews, VA benefits and employment opportunities in the public and private sectors. Mock interviews and resume writing are consistently ranked by participants as the top two sessions that made a difference in their ability to have positive experiences through the hiring process and in obtaining employment. In the past, participating in the seminars was voluntary for Air Force members. As you have heard, the new VOW to Hire Heroes Act now mandates participation for most of the service members. This requirement is projected to increase our requirements to upwards of 35 to 40 sessions per year.

WPAFB is proud of our local initiative with the Base Medical Center wherein the Medical Center notifies the TAP office of military members scheduled to meet the Medical Examining Board (MEB) for evaluation of injuries and a disability determination. This early notification (several months in advance of potential separation) facilitates the member participating in TAP seminars and therefore enables them to plan for the potential separation. The MEB process can take up to 12 months and concludes with a 45 day separation notice. We also have a Recovery Care Coordinator (contractor) located at the Medical Center who assists disabled and homeless veterans and makes referrals to the TAP office. We have also assigned a Community Readiness Consultant to the Guard and Reserve Units in the State. This consultant uses the resources of the TAP office to assist Guard and Reserve members through support and participation in the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. We are experiencing an increased number of members who return from extended tours of duty who need assistance in finding permanent employment. The TAP office also hosts periodic job fairs on base providing direct access for the clients to potential employers.

The WPAFB TAP was recognized in 2001 by DOL as the best program in the Nation. In the 2011 Compliance Inspection (that included real employers as evaluators) the program received an Outstanding rating (highest level).

WOUNDED WARRIOR PROGRAM

There are approximately 80 Air Force members enrolled in the WPAFB Wounded Warrior Program (encompassing the five-state region). In addition, the office provides services to

members of other components who walk-in for information and support. The Air Force members register through a central process managed at the Air Force Personnel Center in San Antonio, Texas. The Center then provides to each base a list of the warriors in their state or region. The program manager provides the required assistance and counseling and continues to track the candidate's progress up to six months after transition. Since the program started, approximately 10 employees have been employed in a federal position – maximizing those warriors who want and are able to work in federal agencies. To date, 7 wounded warriors have been hired at WPAFB through this program. It is important to note that some candidates elect not to register as wounded warriors and I suspect that this number may actually be higher.

We are particularly proud of our Heroes Recognizing Heroes event that is organized by the Wounded Warrior Program Manager. This public ceremony honors their service and welcomes the warrior home. The event includes a guest speaker, who is a wounded warrior and it is supported by 13 community and federal agencies. This is the third year for this event. The program has received decorations from Speaker Boehner's Office, Congressman Austria's Office, and the Office of the Governor.

VETERANS HIRING AND CURRENT WORKFORCE

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base currently employs approximately 12,500 appropriated funded civil service employees. Major areas of employment include:

- Science and Engineering
- Acquisition
- Contracting
- Finance
- Program Analysis
- Information Technology
- Logistics
- Miscellaneous Administrative
- Intelligence
- Medical Research

Note: 52% of occupations are Science & Engineering, Acquisition, Contracting and Finance (generally requiring college degrees)

Since 2007 a total of 7,600 positions have been filled. Of the employees hired for those positions 5,300 have prior military service representing 70% of total hires. Six percent of the hired veterans have 30% or more disability, and seven individuals have been hired through the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program. Wounded Warriors were hired in career fields such as IT, trades & crafts, and technicians.

Wounded warriors are hired using current veterans and miscellaneous hiring authorities:

- Veterans Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA) 1998
- 30% Disabled Veteran Hiring Program
- Selective Placement for Disabled Individual Hiring Authority
- Direct Hire Authority
- Competitive Examining

The near-term hiring outlook for WPAFB has most organizations under a hiring freeze. Two major base organizations with immediate hiring needs are exempt from the hiring freeze due to the funding category utilized.

- The National Air and Space Intelligence Center (NASIC) has identified a requirement to fill 215 positions, primarily Professional/Scientific, some admin & non-professional jobs. One hundred forty of the positions are developmental assignments requiring a four-year college degree (Intelligence Specialists, Engineers and Information Technology).

- The Air Force Research Laboratory's Human Performance Wing has a requirement for 60 positions, primarily Professional/Scientific, some administrative and non-professional. Some positions are in medical-related occupations (i.e. Optometrists, Biomedical Engineering, Physiologists, Psychologists, Physical Scientists, and Technicians).

CLOSING

The TAP at WPAFB is an integrated process that includes individual counseling, seminars, partnerships, resources, the Wounded Warrior Program, Guard and Reserve support, and federal and private organizations and hiring officials. Services are provided to Air Force members as well as members of all other military components who are transitioning in or to Ohio.

In summary, most of the organizations at WPAFB are currently experiencing a hiring freeze that limits the numbers of new hires this year. We've also shown organizations actively hiring require specialized skills and degrees, which narrows employment opportunities. The TAP office continues to grow its network of support to include public sector organizations that may provide employment for Ohio veterans.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in our military who call Ohio home, I thank you and the members of this Committee for your continued support.