



# Department of Veterans Affairs Deployment Lifecycle Guide

*for Human Resources  
Professionals*



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## You are important to VA.

As a Human Resources (HR) professional, you are an advocate for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Military Service member employees, here afterword referred to as Service member employees, and their supervisors. Your role in the Deployment Lifecycle is to support the Service member employee and ensure the workforce is able to support the VA mission while the Service member employee is deployed by coordinating closely with the supervisor.

This guide provides you guidance on the tools available in the HR Professional – Deployment Lifecycle Toolkit which will help support the Service member employee through the deployment lifecycle.

## HR Professional – Deployment Lifecycle Toolkit

This toolkit contains checklists and other helpful information to support you working with Service member employee employees, here afterword referred to as Service member employee, throughout the deployment lifecycle. The toolkit contains:

- **Pre-Deployment Checklist**  
A checklist of job-related actions you need to complete during this phase of the deployment lifecycle
- **Pre-Deployment Session Guide**  
A guide that provides an outline of the topics you should discuss with Service member employees who are getting ready to deploy for extended military service of 30 days or more
- **Deployment Checklist**  
A checklist of job-related actions you need to complete during this phase of the deployment lifecycle
- **Post-Deployment Checklist**  
A checklist of job-related actions you need to complete during this phase of the deployment lifecycle

- **Reintegration Checklist**  
A checklist of job-related actions you need to complete during this phase of the deployment lifecycle
- **Welcome Back letter Template**  
A welcome back template for returning Service member employees
- **Roles Matrix**  
A matrix that defines when the Service member employee, their supervisor, and the Human Resources (HR) professional should be involved to ensure a standardized approach throughout the deployment lifecycle
- **Deployment & Reintegration (D&R) Regional Manager's Map**  
The D&R Regional Managers map of responsibility.

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A: Pre-Deployment Session Guide



## Deployment Lifecycle

Each branch of service has its own terms for the process Service member employees go through when they are called to perform military service.

The VA for Vets program defines the process as five phases:

- Employment & Readiness**  
 Begins when Service member employees are hired by and ends when they receive written or verbal orders to perform military service.
- Pre-Deployment**  
 Starts when Service member employees receive orders, or notification to perform military service, and ends when they depart from their military unit.
- Deployment**  
 Starts when Service member employees perform military service and ends when they complete active duty.
- Post-Deployment**  
 Begins when the Service member employees start the military out-processing procedures and initiates the transition back to employee status and ends when they return to employment.
- Reintegration**  
 Begins when Service member employees complete active duty and ends when they determine they are fully integrated back into the workforce.



### Your Role in the Deployment Lifecycle

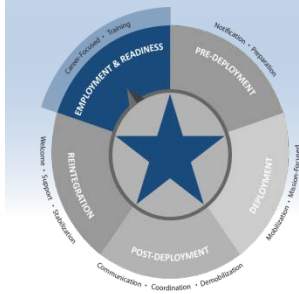
The following roles matrix defines stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and when specific actions should be taken during the Deployment Lifecycle.

Exhibit 1 – Roles Matrix

Employment & Readiness Key Activities	Service member employee	Supervisor	HR
Sign <i>VA for Vets Letter of Agreement</i>	•	•	
Create or revise <i>Transition Plan</i>	•	•	
Pre Deployment Key Activities	Service member employee	Supervisor	HR
Inform supervisor, preferably in writing, of upcoming deployment	•		
Initiate <i>Request for Personnel Action, SF 52</i>		•	
Use <i>Pre-Deployment Advisor</i>	•		
Participate in HR Pre-Deployment session (using results from <i>Pre-Deployment Advisor</i> )	•		•
Update medical, dental, life and long-term care insurance information	•		
Complete <i>Transition Plan</i>	•	•	
Meet to discuss staffing		•	•
Process <i>Request for Personnel Action, SF 52</i>			•
Deployment Key Activities	Service member employee	Supervisor	HR
Communicate with deployed Service member employee as agreed upon		•	•
Post Deployment Key Activities	Service member employee	Supervisor	HR
Inform VA of upcoming return to employment	•		
Revise <i>Transition Plan</i>		•	
Initiate <i>Request for Personnel Action, SF 52</i>		•	
Process <i>Request for Personnel Action, SF 52</i>			•
Meet to discuss staffing		•	•
Revisit <i>Leading the Way</i> WBT and webcasts on effective communications		★	
Reintegration Key Activities	Service member employee	Supervisor	HR
Recognize the Service member employee's service to our country		•	•
Use <i>VA for Vets Career Center</i> to update resume	★		
Provide information on leave and benefits options			•
Update medical, dental, life and long-term care insurance information	•		

★ Optional activity but recommended

## Employment & Readiness



During this phase, the supervisor and the Service member employee discuss and sign the *VA for Vets* Letter of Agreement. After they have signed the Letter of Agreement, the supervisor will send you the original which you will retain in a permanent deployment folder for the Service member employee. The purpose of the Letter of Agreement is to foster and promote more effective communication between the Service member employee and their supervisor. This ensures both parties understand their expectation of support during the Deployment Lifecycle, specifically during the Employment and Readiness phase.

## PRE-DEPLOYMENT



We understand that having a Service member employee called up for active military duty service can affect the Service member employee's benefits and leave, which may cause concerns for the Service member employee. Our goal is to help you minimize those concerns by providing you the key activities you will want to undertake before the Service member employee deploys.

### *Deployment Notification*

When you have been informed that a Service member employee has received deployment orders for extended military service of 30 days or more, you should do the following:

- Schedule a Pre-Deployment session with the Service member employee.
  - Encourage employee to use the *Pre-Deployment Advisor* before the session.
  - Use the *Pre-Deployment Session Guide* at the Pre-Deployment session.
  - Schedule a meeting with the supervisor to discuss staffing needs.
  - Remind the supervisor to submit a *Request for Personnel Action, SF 52*.
  - Process *Request for Personnel Action, SF 52*, when the Service member employees begin leave without pay (Absent-Uniform Services)
- Note:** Ensure that you enter code 473 to update the Service member employee's status to Absent-Uniform Services.



### *VA for Vets Letter of Agreement*

The Letter of Agreement is available at the HR professional and supervisor's link (training and resources) at [VAforVets.va.gov](http://VAforVets.va.gov).

### *Pre-Deployment Advisor*

The Pre-Deployment Advisor is an online tool that can be found in the HR toolkit. It will help you provide advice and assists the Service member employee in examining their benefit needs. The Pre-Deployment Advisor helps the Service member employee by asking questions about their coverage needs in health care, dental and so forth. Based on the answers the Service member employee provides, the Pre-Deployment Advisor determines the best benefit choices for the Service member employee and their family. These results can be printed.

### ***Pre-Deployment Session***

The Pre-Deployment session is a meeting where you and the Service member employee discuss their compensation package (benefits and leave use). The VA for Vets program has developed a *Pre-Deployment Session Guide* for you to use during the session. The guide provides an outline of the topics that you should discuss with Service member employees who are getting ready to deploy for extended military service of 30 days or more. The *Pre-Deployment Session Guide* is available at the HR professional and supervisor's link (training and resources) at [VAforVets.va.gov](https://VAforVets.va.gov).

### ***Supervisory Meeting and Personnel Action***

Schedule a meeting with the supervisor to discuss future staffing requirements that will allow the organization to continue meeting VA's mission while the employee is deployed. When scheduling the meeting, encourage the supervisor to use the Transition Plan as a basis for determining the need for specific skills.

At the meeting, review the differences between short-term and temporary employment options. Remind the supervisor to submit a *Request for Personnel Action*, SF 52, for the deploying Service member employee as soon as possible so that you can process the request.

### ***Pre-Deployment Checklist for Human Resources Professionals***

VA has created a concise checklist that clarifies the tasks you need to complete after you have been informed that a Service member employee has a deployment assignment. The Pre-Deployment Checklist for HR Professionals is available at the HR professional and supervisor's link (training and resources) at [VAforVets.va.gov](https://VAforVets.va.gov).

## Exhibit 2 - Pre-Deployment Checklist for HR Professionals



## Pre-Deployment Checklist Human Resources Professionals

This checklist is intended to assist Human Resources (HR) offices in providing information and services to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee, who is also a Military Service member employee and their supervisor as the Service member employee prepares for military deployment. For more details, see the Pre-Deployment section of the *VA Deployment Lifecycle Guide for HR Professionals* on the *VA for Vets* website (<http://VAforVets.VA.gov>).

**Directions:** Complete each activity on this checklist. Place a check mark in the box provided next to the activity when completed.

**1. Prepare for Pre-Deployment session with Service member employee**

- Review the *Pre-Deployment Session Guide* on the *VA for Vets* website
- Set up a deployment folder for the Service member employee
- Encourage Service member employee to complete Pre-Deployment Advisor

**2. Conduct Pre-Deployment session with Service member employee**

- Provide information on the protections provided by USERRA
- Use the *Pre-Deployment Session Guide* to communicate key information about leave, benefits and compensation to the Service member employee
- Sign the *Pre-Deployment Session Guide* at the end of the session
- Obtain Service member employee's signature on the *Pre-Deployment Session Guide*
- Provide a photocopy to the Service member employee and file the original in the Service member employee's deployment folder
- Make sure the Service member employee is aware of the services provided by D&R Coaches
- Provide the Service member employee with several of your business cards and/or HR point of contact

**3. Seek to obtain an agreement about communicating with the Service member employee while they are on military deployment**

- Agrees with continued communications while on deployment; define the type of communication; obtain contact information for the Service member employee while they are deployed

**OR**

- Does not want to be contacted while on military deployment

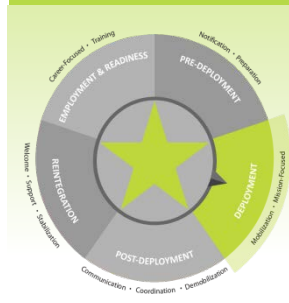
**4. Discuss staffing options with the Service member employee's supervisor**

- Discuss supervisor's coverage needs
- Review differences between short-term and temporary employment options

**5. Process *Request for Personnel Action, SF 52***

- Process *Request for Personnel Action, SF 52*, when the Service member employee begins leave without pay  
(Absent-Uniform Services)
- Ensure code 473is entered when Service member employee status changes to Absent-Uniform Services

## DEPLOYMENT



During this phase, the priority of the Service member employee is to fulfill their military mission.

Before the Service member employee deploys, you should have made an agreement about whether they want to be contacted by you while deployed. Make sure you

maintain the trust you have with the Service member employee by following through on that agreement.

Also, if the Service member employee should contact you, you should respond within 24 hours with the answer to their question or provide a note about when you'll have an answer.



### *Deployment Checklist for Human Resources Professionals*

We have created a concise checklist that lists the job-related actions you need to complete after the Service member employee has been deployed. The Deployment Checklist for HR Professionals is available at the HR professional and supervisor's link (training and resources) at [VAforVets.va.gov](http://VAforVets.va.gov)

## Exhibit 3 - Deployment Checklist for HR Professionals



## Deployment Checklist Human Resources Professionals

This checklist suggests activities that you should complete once the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee, who is also a Military Service member employee, has deployed. For more details, see the Deployment section of the *VA Deployment Lifecycle Guide for Human Resources Professionals* on the *VA for Vets* website (<http://VAforVets.VA.gov>).

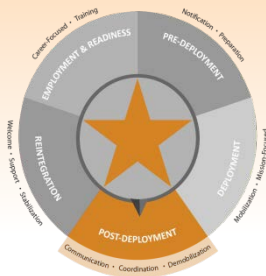
**Directions:** Complete each activity on this checklist. Place a check mark in the box provided next to the activity when completed.

**1. Communicate with Service member employee, if agreed upon during the Pre-Deployment phase**

- Set up a reminder on your calendar to communicate with the Service member employee
- Send the employee a short “thinking of you” email that reminds the Service member employee that you are available if they have any questions or concerns



## POST-DEPLOYMENT



Your role in this phase is to prepare for the Service member employee to return to their job.

### *Reemployment and the Military Service member Employee*

A Service member employee is eligible for protections under USERRA reemployment rights if they have been absent from their position of employment because of service in the uniformed services.

Service in the uniformed services means the performance of duty on a voluntary or involuntary basis in a uniformed service, including:

- Active duty (including activated Guard and Reserve members)
- Active duty for training
- Initial active duty for training
- Inactive duty training
- Full-time National Guard duty
- Absence from work for an examination to determine fitness for duty
- Funeral honors duty performed by National Guard or Reserve members

For the Service member employee to have reemployment rights following a period of service in the uniformed services, the Service member employee must meet the five eligibility criteria. The Service member employee must have:

1. Has left their job to perform military service.
2. Informed their supervisor and/or HR in advance that they were leaving the job for service in the uniformed services
3. Not have exceeded the five-year period of military service not covered by USERRA (see 38 U.S.C. 4312(c) (1 -4)

**Note:** Many types of duty, such as training and contingency operations, are exempted from the five-year limitation.

4. Been released from military service under "honorable conditions"
5. Reported back to their supervisor and/or HR in a timely manner or have submitted a timely application for reemployment. Timely is defined as:
  - Less than 31 days of military service, report the next scheduled work following release from military service plus the expiration of 8 hours after the time for safe transportation back to the employee's residence.
  - 30 - 181 consecutive days of military service, apply within 14 days after completion of service
  - 180 or more consecutive days of military service, apply within 90 days after completion of service

## ***Notification from Military Service member Employee of Return to Work Position***

When you are notified that a Service member employee will be returning to their VA position, you should tell the Service member employee that:

- A job is waiting for him or her when they return.
- They should visit the VA for Vets website (<http://www.VAforVets.VA.gov>) for Post-Deployment resources.
- They should contact their D&R Regional Manager for Post-Deployment support.
- They should contact HR to update benefits, if applicable.

Once you have replied to the Service member employee, you need to:

- Determine whether or not the Service member employee is entitled to five days of excused absence. If entitled, confirm that the five days of excused absence has been scheduled. This is important so that you know when to process the *Request for Personnel Action, SF 52*, for return to duty.
- Remind the supervisor to generate a *Request for Personnel Action, SF 52* for the Service member employee

**Note:** When you process the *Request for Personnel Action, SF 52*, ensure that you change the Absent-Uniform Services code from 473 to 292 Updating the code generates a time card for pay upon the Service member employee reinstatement.

Coordinate with their supervisor to discuss whether the Service member employee will be returning to the position they held prior to deployment or to a comparable job on the supervisor's current staff or another staff. Also, if applicable, remind the supervisor about the Service member employee's five days of excused absence and how it applies in this situation.

### ***Five Days of Excused Absence***

For the Service member employee to be entitled to five days of excused absence, the Service member employees must have:

- Been called up to support the Global War on Terrorism. Served for 42 or more consecutive days.
- Utilized one 5 day excused absence, once in a 12 month period.

## ***Post-Deployment Checklist for Human Resources Professionals***

We have created a concise checklist that lists the job-related actions you need to complete after you have been informed that a Service member employee will be returning to work. The Post-Deployment Checklist for HR Professionals is available at the HR professional and supervisor's link (training and resources) at [VAforVets.va.gov](http://VAforVets.va.gov)

## Exhibit 4 - Post-Deployment Checklist for HR Professionals



## Post-Deployment Checklist Human Resources Professionals

This checklist suggests activities that you should complete once you have been notified that a deployed Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee, who is also a Military Service member employee, is in the process of returning to work. These activities are recommended to ease the Service member employee's transition from active duty to civilian employment. For more details, see the Post-Deployment section of the *VA Deployment Lifecycle Guide for Human Resources Professionals* on the VA for Vets website (<http://VAforVets.VA.gov>).

**Directions:** Complete each activity on this checklist. Place a check mark in the box provided next to the activity when completed.

**1. Discuss staffing options with the Service member employee's supervisor**

- Discuss supervisor's coverage needs to determine if the Service member employee is returning to same position

**2. Confirm and process personnel action**

- Confirm that five days of excused absence have been scheduled (if entitled)
- Remind supervisor to initiate SF 52
- Process SF 52 on behalf of the supervisor and Service member employee

**3. Communicate with Service member employee**

- Send the Service member employee a short email that:
  - o Reminds the Service member employee that you are available if they have any questions or concerns
  - o Reiterates the anticipated date of their return to work

## REINTEGRATION:



More often than not Service member employees return to work emotionally stressed and anxious over the changes that have taken place in the workplace.

You will need to coordinate closely with the Service member employee so that their transition back into civilian employment is as smooth as possible.

### ***One Week Before Service Member Employee Returns to Work***

Send an email to your Service member employee welcoming him or her back, along with a “thank you” note for their service. See the “Welcome Home Tip Sheet” available at the HR professional and supervisor’s link (training and resources) at [VAforVets.va.gov](http://VAforVets.va.gov).

In the email message, encourage him or her to:

- Contact you with any questions about benefits
- Update their resume with the new skills acquired while deployed using the *VA for Vets* Career Center
- Request for Personnel Action, SF 52

When you receive the Request for Personnel Action, SF 52 from the supervisor, ensure that you change the Absent-Uniform Services code 473 to 292. This will generate a time card for pay upon the Service member employee reinstatement.

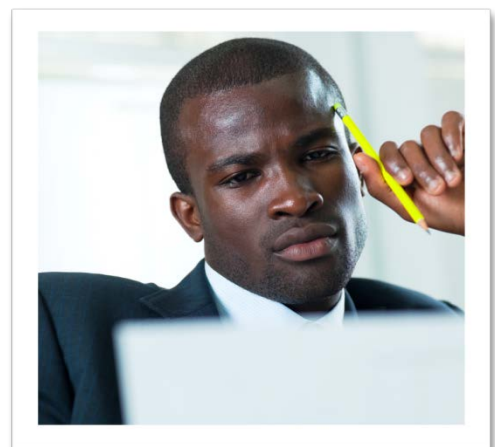
### ***Service member Employee Returns to Work***

Within the first week that the Service member employee return to work, you should send an email asking if they have any questions or concerns about health insurance or other benefits and if everything is going well. If the Service member employee has concerns that are not HR-related (feeling overwhelmed or stressed), refer the Service member employee to a *VA for Vets* coach. The *VA for Vets* coach offers one-on-one reintegration support. Provide the *VA for Vets* coach’s phone number: 1-855-VA4VETS (1-855-824-8387)

If the Service member employee is exhibiting signs of extreme distress, refer him or her to Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or medical provider.

### ***Reintegration Checklist for Human Resources Professionals***

We have created a concise checklist that lists the job-related actions you need to complete after you have been informed that a Service member employee have notified



their employer that they will be returning. The Reintegration Checklist for HR Professionals is available at the HR professional and supervisor's link (training and resources) at [VAforVets.va.gov](https://VAforVets.va.gov).

## Exhibit 5 - Reintegration Checklist for HR Professionals



## Reintegration Checklist Human Resources Professionals

This checklist is intended to assist Human Resources (HR) offices in providing information and services to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee, who is also a Military Service member employee and their supervisor as the Service member employee prepares to return to VA from military deployment. For more details, see the Reintegration section of the *VA Deployment Lifecycle Guide for HR Professionals* on the *VA for Vets* website (<http://VAforVets.VA.gov>).

**Directions:** Complete each activity on this checklist. Place a check mark in the box provided next to the activity when completed.

### 1. Contact the Service member employee

- Welcome the Service member employee back and say “thank you” for their service
- Verify that Service member employee benefits or compensation concerns have been addressed (example: any adjustments to health insurance or other benefits)
- Ensure Absent-Uniform Services code change from 473 to 292 generating a time card for pay upon Service member employee reinstatement
- Encourage the Service member employee to update their resume using the *VA for Vets* Career Center
- Provide the D&R Regional Manager’s information:

## Attachment A: Pre-Deployment Session Guide

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# Pre-Deployment Session Guide

HR Professionals

November 6, 2011

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This guide provides an outline of the topics that Human Resources (HR) professionals should discuss with Service member employees who are getting ready to deploy for extended military service of 30 days or more.

### PRIOR TO A PRE-DEPLOYMENT SESSION

**Directions:** Complete each activity prior to a scheduled Pre-Deployment session. Place a check mark in the box provided next to the activity when completed.

- Contact the Service member employee to arrange a convenient time to meet.
- Let the Service member employee know that they are welcome to bring a spouse, other family member or friend to the session.
- Review the Service member employee's benefits.
- Review the TSP Fact Sheet Publication: TSP Benefits That Apply to Members of the Military Who Return to Federal Civilian Service (3/2002) at <http://www.tsp.gov/forms/oc95-5.pdf>.
- Obtain blank copies of the following forms:
  - *FEHB Authorization to Release Information*
  - *FEDVIP Authorization to Release Information*
  - *LTC Authorization to Release Information*
  - *FSAFEDS Authorization to Release Information*
  - Beneficiary forms (FEGLI, retirement deductions (2), unpaid compensation, TSP on hand)
- Obtain a copy of the USERRA poster from the *VA for Vets* website.
- Review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about military leave at <http://vaww1.va.gov/ohrm/WorkLife/Leave/MilitaryLeave.doc>.
- Ensure that the Service member employee's supervisor has initiated a *Request for Personnel Action*, SF 52.

## DURING A PRE-DEPLOYMENT SESSION

**Directions:** Discuss each item with the Service member employee. Place a check mark in the box provided next to the item as it is discussed.

### Job Protection

- Provide the Service member employee with a copy of the USERRA poster and ask if they have any questions about their USERRA rights. Be sure the Service member employee understands their reinstatement rights as they pertain to the length of the deployment.
- Inform the Service member employee that USERRA training is available on the VA Talent Management System (TMS) located at #897931.
- Tell the Service member employee that they do not have to resign from their position to perform active military duty. However, if their cumulative active military duty exceeds five (5) years, they may be separated from their position.

### Leave

- Military Leave

The Service member employee has military leave they would like to use.

Number of days/hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Time(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** A Service member employee may carry over a maximum of 15 days of military leave into a new fiscal year (FY). Therefore, a Service member employee may potentially have a total of 30 days to use in any one FY. In addition, Service member employees whose military duty spans two FYs may use up to 45 days of military leave at one time.

- 22 Days of Military Leave (5 U.S.C. 6323(b))

The Service member employee is entitled to use 22 additional workdays per calendar year when he or she:

- Performs military duties in support of civil authorities in the protection of life and property, or
- Performs full-time military service because the Service member employee is called to active duty in support of a contingency operation service.

Inform the Service member employee that if they elect to use the 22 days of military leave, they are entitled to receive the greater of civilian or military pay, but not both. The Service member employee's civilian pay will be reduced by the amount of military pay for the days that they use military leave. The Service member employee must provide a copy of their active duty orders and military pay documentation (Leave and Earning Statement – LES) to the HR office to claim this entitlement.

- Annual Leave

The Service member employee wants:

\_\_\_ accumulated annual leave to remain to their credit.

\_\_\_ A lump monetary sum for the balance of their accumulated annual leave.

\_\_\_ To use part of their accumulated annual leave; number of days/hours: \_\_\_\_\_.

Active Duty Military Leave Without Pay (ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES)

The Service member employee wants to be placed on ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES, beginning

\_\_\_\_\_ (the first civilian day following military leave, annual leave, compensatory time and /or credit hours).

Inform the Service member employee that they earn and uses leave on an hourly basis. This means that for each pay period during the leave year when their total accumulated hours of ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES equals 80, and each 80-hour increment of ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES thereafter during the leave year, they will not accrue annual and sick leave in that pay period. ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES hours in excess of 80, if any, in that same pay period will be carried over to the next pay period. Carryover hours will be combined with ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES hours in the next period to determine whether they accrue annual and sick leave during that pay period. This process will be repeated every pay period each leave year.

Inform the Service member employee that they earn and uses leave on a daily basis. This means that for each pay period during the leave year when the total accumulated days of ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES equals 14, and each 14-day increment of ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES thereafter during the leave year, they will not accrue annual and sick leave in that pay period. ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES days in excess of 14, if any, in that same pay period will be carried over to the next pay period. Carryover days will be combined with LWOP days in the next period to determine whether they accrue annual and sick leave during that pay period. This process will be repeated every pay period each leave year.

Excused Absence

When the Service member employee returns to Federal civilian service, they are entitled to five consecutive days of excused absence (paid time off) when they return from 42 or more days of consecutive active military service in connection with Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or any other operation subsequently established under Executive Order 13223.

When the Service member employee notifies their employer of the date they intend to return to duty, the five days of excused absence should be granted before they resume their duties. If the Service member employee has already returned to duty, they may request to use the five days of excused absence at a mutually agreeable time. The excused absence cannot be used on an intermittent basis after returning to duty and may be used only once per 12-month period.

## Compensation

- Inform the Service member employee that when performing active military duty their compensation will be based on the terms of their military pay grade. The Service member employee will not receive compensation from their position unless they elect to use military leave, annual leave or compensatory time or are entitled to reservist differential.

If the Service member employee elects to take the lump-sum annual leave option and returns to civilian employment before the end of the period covered by the lump sum, they will be required to repay all the remaining days or hours of work that the lump-sum payment covered.

The Service member employee may be entitled to reservist differential if their military pay is less than their civilian pay. The Service member employee must provide a copy of their active duty orders and military Leave and Earnings Statements (LES) to claim reservist differential.

## Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB)

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/>

- The Service member employee wants to terminate FEHB coverage and have it reinstated upon their return work.

Tell the Service member employee that they must notify HR in writing that they have terminated FEHB coverage. Otherwise, their FEHB coverage will continue and they may be responsible for the premiums.

- The Service member employee elects to continue FEHB coverage.

Tell the Service member employee that they should always notify both the FEHB and TRICARE about the dual coverage during deployment so that both health plans can properly coordinate benefits. This is extremely important for covered family members, since the FEHB will pay first before coordinating with TRICARE for possible additional payment. This may save family members some out-of-pocket expenses.

Provide the Service member employee with a copy of the appropriate form, i.e., BC/BS, GEHA, *and Authorization to Release Information* form. They can complete this form by naming an individual (usually a spouse or parent) who is eligible to receive information from the plan when they call. This form can then be faxed to the appropriate FEHB plan. This eliminates the need for a family member to submit copies of paperwork and power of attorney to obtain information. This is especially beneficial for a spouse trying to finalize claims on him- or herself and/or covered children.

If the Service member employee has family members who will remain covered under the FEHB plan, you may want to provide the Service member employee with a copy of the Benefit Plan Booklet for the appropriate health plan.

- The Service member employee is being called to active duty that does not support a contingency operation and wants to continue FEHB coverage.

Tell the Service member employee that they can continue their health insurance for up to 24 months while in an ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES status. For the first 12 months, the Service member employee will be responsible for only the Service member employee's portion of the premiums. For the remaining 12 months, the Service member employee will be responsible for the Service member employee's portion and the government's portion plus a 2 percent administrative fee. This means the Service member employee will pay 102 percent of the cost that must be paid currently. The 24-month period will begin on the date the Service member employee's active duty service begins.

- The Service member employee is being called to active duty in support of a contingency operation and wants to continue FEHB coverage.

Tell the Service member employee that their federal employer will pay the Service member employee's share of the premiums for up to 24 months while in an ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES status. The 24-month period will begin on the date the Service member employee's active duty service begins. Please note that if, at any time, the Service member employee receives their civilian pay during their deployment, the FEHB premiums will be deducted from their salary. For example, if the Service member employee elects to use their 15-day military leave entitlement beginning on October 1st of the next fiscal year, because the Service member employee is in a paid status, FEHB premiums will be deducted.

**Note:** The Service member employee cannot continue health insurance coverage under FEHB beyond the 24-month period. However, at the end of the 24 months, the Service member employee has a 31-day extension of coverage and the option to convert to an individual policy offered through their health insurance plan.

If the Service member employee is participating in premium conversion, the Service member employee has 60 days from the start of their unpaid leave of absence to waive participation or cancel their FEHB coverage. If the Service member employee does not terminate participation in premium conversion within the 60-day limit, the Service member employee cannot cancel their FEHB, except during the annual FEHB open season or 60 days after another qualifying event.

#### **Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)**

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/life>

- Tell the Service member employee that their FEGLI coverage (if enrolled) will continue at no cost to him or her for up to 12 months in a nonpaid status and will then terminate with an automatic 31-day extension of coverage and right to convert to an individual policy.

Based on a law effective January 28, 2008, the Service member employee may elect to continue their FEGLI coverage for an additional 12 months of ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES. During the additional 12 months of FEGLI coverage, the Service member employee must pay the Service member employee's and the agency's share of premiums for basic coverage and the full premium for any optional coverage for which they are enrolled. There is no agency contribution for the additional 12 months.

**Note:** The Service member employee must complete the Employee Notice and FEGLI election form, *Extension of Coverage When Called to Active Duty*, to make the election for the additional 12 months of coverage. This form must be returned to HR before the end of the Service member employee's initial 12 months of ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES. The Service member employee must make arrangements with their local payroll office for the payment of these premiums while they are away, since the Service member employee cannot pay them when they return to duty under the Service member employee's restoration rights.

If the Service member employee decides to resign from Federal service because of deployment, the Service member employee's FEGLI coverage will continue at no cost for up to 12 months, or until 90 days after their military service ends, whichever date comes first, and will then terminate with a 31-day extension of coverage and right to convert to an individual policy.

- Inform the Service member employee that, within 60 days after the date of notification of deployment, they may elect Basic, (if not enrolled in FEGLI), Option A and Option B (up to a maximum of 5 multiples physical). They can make this election on the SF 2817 (either hard copy from HR or electronic version from the OPM website). It would be to the employee's advantage to either add FEGLI and/or max out the amount of eligible FEGLI, since the federal employer will pay the premium for up to 12 months in an ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES status.
- Encourage the Service member employee to verify that beneficiary data are up-to-date. If the Service member employee is unsure, recommend that they complete new forms.



**Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)**

<http://www.tsp.gov>

- Ask the Service member employee if they have a TSP loan from their uniformed service TSP account. If yes, tell the Service member employee that the TSP loan payments will be suspended for the entire period of their active military service, and loan payments will resume when they return to work.
- Ask the Service member employee if they have a TSP loan from a civilian TSP account. If yes, tell the Service member employee that their loan payments will stop because they come from payroll deductions. Also inform the Service member employee that they cannot make payments on that loan from their military pay. However, they can continue to make loan payments by sending a personal check or money order to the TSP along with a TSP Loan Payment Coupon.
- Ask the Service member employee if they would like their loan payments suspended until they return to work. If yes, submit Form TSP-41, *Notification to TSP of Non-pay Status*, for the Service member employee. Submission of this form will suspend the Service member employee's loan payments until they return to work. Ask for the TSP loan number: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Inform the Service member employee that if they still have an outstanding TSP loan from their civilian TSP account when they return from deployment, they should tell HR to prepare and submit a second TSP-41 to inform TSP of a return to pay status. Tell the Service member employee that they are responsible for reviewing their Leave and Earnings Statement and ensuring that correct loan payments are submitted on time.
- Inform the Service member employee that they may make retroactive contributions and elections to their TSP account. Within 60 days of the Service member employee's restoration to duty, the Service member employee will need to contact HR to indicate their desire to make retroactive TSP contributions and elections. Your federal employer will make up missed agency contributions for eligible FERS Service member employees.

The Service member employee's retroactive contributions and elections will be reduced if the Service member employee contributed to TSP as a military Service member employee while on active duty. The Service member employee is responsible for providing all Leave and Earnings Statements if TSP contributions were made while on active duty.

- Encourage the Service member employee to verify that beneficiary data are up-to-date. If the Service member employee is unsure whether the data are up-to-date, recommend that they complete new forms.

**Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)**

<http://www.benefeds.com>

- Explain that the Service member employee must pay FEDVIP in order for benefits to remain in effect while the Service member employee is in an ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES status. Tell the Service member employee to contact FEDVIP at 1-877-888-3337 to ensure they have the correct billing address to which to send bills. (FEDVIP will send bills if there are no payroll deductions to pay the premiums.)  
**Note:** Premiums paid by Direct Bill are not pretax.
- Review dental plans for orthodontia waiting periods to determine if it may impact family members at home. Tell the Service member employee that if the dental plan is dropped while they are deployed, and there are family members who will need orthodontia treatment, they may have to start the waiting period all over again.
- Provide the Service member employee with a copy of the FEDVIP *Authorization to Release Information* form. The Service member employee can complete this form, naming an individual (usually a spouse or parent) who is eligible to receive information from the plan when they call. This form can then be faxed to FEDVIP. This eliminates the need for a family member to submit copies of paperwork and power of attorney to obtain information. (This is especially beneficial for a spouse who is trying to finalize claims on him- or herself and/or covered children.)
- If the Service member employee chooses to cancel their FEDVIP, they can cancel 31 days before or 60 days after the date of deployment by calling BENEFEDES at 1-877-888-3337 or TTY 1-877-889-5680. Inform the Service member employee that when they return to work from military duty, they can elect to enroll in FEDVIP within 60 days after their orders end.

**Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP)**

<https://www.ltcfeds.com/>

- Explain that the Service member employee must pay long-term care (LTC) for benefits to remain in effect while the Service member employee is in an LWOP status. Tell the Service member employee to contact FLTCIP at 1-800-582-3337 to ensure FLTCIP has the correct billing address to which to send bills.  
**Note:** LTC will send bills if there are no payroll deductions to pay the premiums.
- Provide the Service member employee with a copy of the FLTCIP *Authorization to Release Information* form. The Service member employee can complete this form, naming an individual (usually a spouse or parent) who is eligible to receive information from the plan when they call. This form can then be faxed to LTC. Tell the Service member employee that this eliminates the need for a family member to submit copies of paperwork and power of attorney to obtain information regarding LTC.

**Federal Flexible Spending Account (FSAFEDS)**

<http://www.fsafeds.com>

- Provide the Service member employee with a copy of the FSAFEDS Authorization to Release Information form. Tell the Service member employee that they can complete this form, naming an individual (usually a spouse or parent) who is eligible to receive information from the plan when they call. The form can then be faxed to FSAFEDS (1-866-643-2245 toll free; or 1-502-267-2233 outside the United States). This eliminates the need for a family member to submit copies of paperwork and power of attorney to obtain information.
- Inform the Service member employee that they may arrange to prepay their allotments before entering an ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES status. The prepayment amount would be added to their normal payment. This means that their biweekly deductions would be increased based on the amount they specify to prepay.

If the Service member employee does not prepay before their ABSENT-UNIFORM SERVICES status, their FSA will be frozen, and they will not be eligible for reimbursement for any expenses incurred during that period until the plan year ends or until the Service member employee returns to their job and begins making allotments again. When the Service member employee returns, their allotments will be made on a catch-up basis. If doubling the amount is not enough to catch up by the end of the plan year, the Service member employee's allotment will be increased proportionately over the pay dates remaining in the plan year, or they may pay the allotments directly on an after-tax basis.

- If the Service member employee has a balance in their Health Care Flexible Savings Account (HCFSA) or Limited Expense Health Care Flexible Savings Account (LEX HCFSA) and thinks they might not be able to incur enough eligible expenses to deplete the account, rather than forfeit those funds (remember the use-or-lose rule for FSA accounts), the Service member employee can have their balance refunded to him- or herself. This new feature is for Qualified Reservists only under the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax (HEART) Act. The HEART Act (Public Law No. 110-245) contains tax benefits and incentives for individuals in military service. Section 114 of the HEART Act allows qualified reservists to receive a taxable distribution of their unused HCFSA—also known as a qualified reservist distribution (QRD). FSAFEDS adopted Section 114 of the HEART Act, effective January 1, 2009. Tell the Service member employee that the drawback is that the distribution will be taxable wages and that they give up their ability to submit eligible expenses for the remainder of the benefit period.
- If the Service member employee decides to resign from their position their FSA will terminate as of the date of their separation. There are no extensions. However, for the Service member employee's health care account, they can submit claims with dates of service from the effective date through separation date. For the Service member employee's dependent care account, they can submit claims for the entire plan year.
- Tell the Service member employee to contact FSA benefits counselors at 1-877-372-3337 if they have additional questions regarding FSA.

**Return to Civilian Employment**

- Inform the Service member employee that they inform HR of their date of return to employment.
- Remind the Service member employee that you will work together to arrange a seamless transition back into the workforce and to get the Service member employee's benefits in place.

**HR Point of Contact**

- Provide the Service member employee with several copies of your business card and/or HR point of contact so that he or she, as well as family members, has a point of contact in the event they have any questions or need to speak to someone from the HR department. Tell the Service member employee that they may contact you about concerns with continuation of benefits coverage.

**Note:** If the Service member employee contacts you while deployed make sure you contact him or her within 24 hours with an answer or to inform him or her that you will get back to them shortly with an answer. If you do not know the answer to the question, find the answer. Also, never put a deployed Service member employee on hold.

**Service member employee Contact Information (while on Active Duty)**

- Mailing address

Ask the Service member employee if they will be changing mailing addresses as a result of deployment. Often, the Service member employee may be giving up their apartment while deployed and using a parent's address; the Service member employee may need to update records with the new address.

- Email address

Obtain an email address that the Service member employee will use while on military deployment. Most Service member employees will provide both a military and a personal email address should HR ever need to make contact.

**Service member employee Contact Information (while on active duty):**

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**In Case of Emergency, Contact:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Miscellaneous**

- Provide the Service member employee with copies of all submitted documentation. Tell the Service member employee that they should provide a family member or friend with copies of all submitted documentation.
- Explain to the Service member employee that they should make sure a family member(s) or a friend(s) knows their branch of service, rank, unit, company or battalion name, Social Security Number, last known military location, military unit contact person(s), and contact information. Also, recommend to the Service member employee that they consider preparing a power of attorney, particularly including employment issues and benefits.

*By signing, you confirm that you have been counseled on each item in this guide and that you understand your options for leave and benefits.*

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Service member employee

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Date

*By signing, you confirm that you have counseled the deploying Service member employee on each item in this guide.*

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HR Professional

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Date