



# Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries

## Apprenticeship & Training Division

**Date:** December 10, 2014  
**To:** Oregon Employers of Veterans  
**From:** John Kersey, Oregon State Approving Agency Director  
**Subject:** Department of Veteran's Affairs Outreach Presentation

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This memo will introduce the federal Department of Veteran's Affairs opportunity for veterans to use GI Bill benefits for trainee and apprenticeship programs. We detail the prerequisites of the program, the benefits to the veteran employee and the employer, and program operation once approval has been established. All of the official information that the Department of Veteran's Affairs provides to employers and veterans is located on their main website at: <http://www.va.gov/> and also <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/>. The program is also covered under the Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations found here: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/warms/topic-title38.asp>.

### **Program Description and Prerequisites:**

The Department of Veteran's Affairs has instituted a program that allows veterans to use their G.I. Bill benefits while employed in positions that have a structured On-the-Job Training program (OJT) or a Registered Apprenticeship program. The Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) provides payment in the form of a tax-free stipend every month to the veteran while they receive training in the approved program.

In order to qualify for benefits, the veteran must meet the following criteria:

1. The veteran must have been released from active duty within the past 15 years with an Honorable Discharge.
2. The occupation must have a federally registered occupational code.
3. The veteran must be hired into a structured training program. (Occupational Standard)
4. The structured training program must be no less than 1000 hours.
5. The veteran must have a structured pay scale that has a step progression to a journeyman or production wage at the end of the program.
6. Upon completion of the program, the veteran will have attained journeyman or job certification status in the approved occupation.

The term *federally registered occupational code* means that the occupation the veteran is training for is listed on the O\*NET [Occupational Information Network (O\*NET)] online portal (<http://www.onetonline.org/>). O\*NET serves as the nation's primary source of occupational information. The O\*NET is developed under the sponsorship of the **US Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration (USDOL/ETA)**. The O\*NET portal provides information that describes the type of work an occupation performs as well as general information about the training curriculum involved. If the occupation is found in the O\*NET portal then an Occupational Standard may be created for it.

The development of an *Occupational Standard* requires the employer to outline the training curriculum of the specific occupation. It details the description of the position, the minimum requirements to be hired as a trainee or apprentice, the work processes, the related training and classroom instruction, the journeyman or production wage as well as the step progressions, the ratio of journeymen to trainees, the supervision model, and finally the length of program. The Occupational Standard is a blueprint for the training of a specific occupation from the initial hiring until the final completion.

Attached to this document are examples of a completed Occupational Standards for a Police Officer (Attachment E), a Carpenter (Attachment F), and an Inside Electrician (Attachment G). The Police Officer standard is for a typical Trainee program while the Carpenter standard is for a Registered Apprenticeship program with the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI). The Inside Electrician standard is an example of yet another Registered Apprenticeship program with

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BOLI, but for a licensed trade. Each of the attached standards contains the work processes involved in training for their associated occupation. A *work process* is a specific duty or function of a job or occupation. Each standard will list the approximate number of hours required to be completely trained in each work process for an occupation. An example would be in the Police Officer standard, the employer requires 680 hours of training to be performed in order to have the trainee complete the Field Training Educational Program [FTEP] work process. After 2,840 hours of OJT training in all the associated work processes, the Police Officer trainee would have completed their training and graduated from the OJT program.

In all three attached sample standards, the apprentices or trainees begin with a wage set at a specific amount which is less than what is classified as the journeyman, licensee, or production wage. The Occupational Standards must include at least one step-progression in wages to demonstrate that the apprentice or trainee is progressing through the program and being paid for measurable gain in necessary program experience. Upon completion of the program, the apprentice or trainee wages will be set to the production or journeyman step.

A well-developed training infrastructure limits workforce attrition, improves employee satisfaction and substantially lowers costs. It allows the employer to provide internal advancement opportunities to the existing employees and foster cooperation between employer and employee. The employer will have the opportunity to structure the training of all their employees with specific work processes and methods unique to the organization and to industry standards. The employer will also achieve reduced training costs; workers enter employment below the average journeyworker or production wage and advance only with increased competency.

If any employer and the veteran are able to meet all these prerequisites, then the facility may be approved and the veteran may receive their GI Bill educational and OJT benefits. The approval to train veterans also allows the employer to make a direct and meaningful positive impact upon the veteran's life and well-being. The employer also enjoys the benefit of being approved as a very viable and visible recruitment tool of veterans for their organization.

#### **Veteran and Employer Benefits:**

When a veteran is employed in an occupation by an employer or organization that is approved to train veterans, the veteran may certify their hours monthly to receive a tax-free stipend while participating in the program. The stipend amount varies per veteran dependent upon what chapter the veteran is enrolled in (Chapter 30, 33, 35, 1606 and 1607), contractual agreements determined at time of enlistment (kickers) and amount of time served. On average a veteran will receive \$17,480.00 a year in benefits if they maintain full time status with their employer and the DVA.

The veteran also gains the benefit of having a structured and organized work environment where the training and guidance they receive is planned and documented. The Bureau of Labor and Statistics published a report in 2013 which listed the attrition rate in federally registered occupations for veterans to be approximately 12% while the attrition rate for non-veterans was under 6%. One of the leading factors for veteran attrition is lack of a structured environment and inability to cope with reintegration into society. An OJT or Apprenticeship program provides a veteran with a structured and stable work environment and contributes to a strong retention rate for veterans in the work force.

Independent of the approval to train veterans from the DVA, the Department of Defense funds a program that provides free veteran-supportive training to employers to help them manage their veteran employees. The goal of the program is to decrease employee absenteeism and work-family conflict as well as increase employee retention, performance and job satisfaction. The program, called SERVe, maintains a website which will contain more information located at <http://www.servestudy.org/>.

#### **Employer Requirements and BOLI Assistance:**

The Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) helps minimize the burden upon the employer in the petition for approval with the federal DVA. BOLI will provide technical assistance to complete and submit forms to the DVA for approval. The employer application forms are attached. BOLI staff has experience to assist employers meet federal requirements for any occupation recognized within the O\*NET system. We can help identify and outline Work Processes, develop curriculum and institute any necessary administrative processes.

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Once approved, the employer responsibilities are payroll functions and ensuring that the veteran receives necessary training on the job. The employer will appoint a person, called the Certifying Official, to be responsible for those functions; commonly that it the already established payroll or human resources staff. Once a month, the Certifying Official faxes a form to the VA so that the veteran may receive benefits for the month worked.

The VA file is kept on premise. BOLI has processes developed to ensure that the retention of records is of minimal impact as possible upon the employer. The veteran is also provided documentation and guidance on how to submit information to the CO to ensure sure smooth processing of benefits with the VA and minimize time the employer has to spend handling records.

**Goals of the Bureau of Labor and Industries:**

BOLI is dedicated to helping employers develop programs to allow the veterans they employ to utilize their benefits. In 2013, BOLI had a 64% increase in active facilities approved to train veterans. The DVA through the efforts of BOLI was able to issue \$3.55 million dollars to 234 enrolled veterans from October 2013 to October 2014. BOLI is determined to increase the amount of money and the number of veterans receiving benefits in 2015.

The purpose of this documentation is to provide insight and information as to the process for being an approved facility with the Department of Veteran's Affairs. Both the DVA and BOLI appreciate employers enrolling in this program to benefit their veterans. Should an employer wish to be approved to train veterans, please contact the SAA Director for BOLI to begin the approval process.

Thank you,

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