

VFW and Columbia University Announce Military Transition Collaboration

The VFW and Columbia's Center for Veteran Transition and Integration team up to solve critical transition issues

Dec 04, 2024

WASHINGTON – The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is proud to announce its newest relationship with Columbia University's Center for Veteran Transition and Integration (CVTI) in a new initiative focused on improving transition outcomes for separating and retiring service members. The joint effort, which aims to better understand the complexities of service members' transitions into civilian life, seeks to inform policy discussions and affect meaningful change to available support programming.

Leveraging the direct contact VFW Pre-Discharge Claims representatives have with, on average, 14,000 transitioning service members annually, the VFW has begun collecting and submitting anonymized survey data to CVTI for analysis and reporting assistance. The collaborative research will seek to identify high points, trends and disparities among transitioning service members and recently separated and retired veterans who filed Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) claims. These findings are intended to shape legislative, policy and program improvements to resources like the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program, as well as inform the creation of new and necessary support services.

"Transition is a pivotal time in every service member's military career bringing with it changes beyond what many have known since they volunteered to serve," said VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci. "Through the VFW's robust network of accredited Pre-Discharge Claims representatives and persistent advocacy on Capitol Hill, the VFW is heavily engaged in ensuring all transitioning service members have the benefits, support and tools they need to thrive as veterans. More than 10 years ago, the VFW started comprehensive client experience surveys for those we assist on military installations to

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better tailor our services and advocacy to their needs. This new relationship with CVTI is the next step in understanding how the transition experience has evolved over time so that we can provide real time, data-informed insight on the needs of today's transitioning force."

Each year, roughly 200,000 service members exit the military and return to civilian life after highly variable lengths of service and experiences while serving. This variability necessitates a deliberate approach to how service members are supported before, during and after discharge or retirement as they re-enter their communities, seek higher education and join the workforce.

With complementary missions and areas of expertise, the VFW and CVTI are uniquely positioned to uncover the nuances of transition experiences and recommend viable solutions to real problems that veterans face, including heightened suicide risk in the months after discharge and the struggle of some veterans to reach their full potential in civilian workplaces.

"Effectively serving the veteran community requires moving beyond personal anecdotes or stereotypes and getting into the lived experiences of service members as they navigate the transition from military service to education and beyond," said CVTI Executive Director Jason Dempsey. "Our collaboration presents an amazing opportunity to inform and refine the efforts of those seeking to assist veterans in this journey."

Research will consider important data points including service member demographics, location in which they filed their BDD claim, service characteristics, timeliness and ability to engage transition resources, concerns about transition, higher education aspirations and preparedness, and much more.

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About the VFW: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is the nation's largest and oldest major war veterans organization. Founded in 1899, the congressionally chartered VFW is comprised entirely of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. With more than 1.4 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in nearly 6,000 Posts worldwide, the nonprofit veterans service organization is proud to proclaim "NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS" than the VFW, which is dedicated to veterans' service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information or to join, visit our website at [vfw.org](https://www.vfw.org).

About the Center for Veteran Transition and Integration: CVTI improves the lives of veterans, transitioning service members, and their families by collaborating with institutions, organizations, municipalities, and practitioners to build and integrate cultures of support in higher education and the workplace. Since its founding in 2017, CVTI has served over 200,000 veterans and transitioning service members in their post-military educational and vocational pursuits. For more information, visit veterans.columbia.edu.