MILITARY TRANSITION
Assistance Program (TAP) Guide
What is the Transition Assistance Program?

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) provides information and resources that help prepare servicemembers and their spouses for success in the civilian world. It is a combined effort of six different government agencies, including the Department of Defense, the Department of Education and the Department of Labor.

The military transition assistance curriculum includes required core modules that cover subjects such as handling finances, exploring career options and conducting an effective job search. Additionally, servicemembers can choose to pursue one or more optional tracks about accessing higher education, career technical training and entrepreneurship training.

A Capstone event is used to evaluate whether or not servicemembers have met Career Readiness Standards (CRS) and have a viable Individual Transition Plan (ITP). Those who require further assistance after leaving the military are directed to partners such as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success) Curriculum

To better assist those transitioning out of the military, TAP was redesigned in 2013 to be more cohesive, modular and outcome-based. It now uses the Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success) curriculum, which includes core modules that teach critical skills like financial planning and resume writing, plus training tracks that can help get you ready to pursue a college degree or start a business. It is also available to spouses during the servicemember's transition.

With only a few exceptions, all servicemembers must complete the TAP core modules. This takes five days and covers:

- How military skills, training and experience translate into civilian credentialing
- Financial planning, including how to build a 12-month post-separation budget
- How to apply for VA benefits
- Personal appraisal, including identifying your strengths, analyzing your skills and determining your work preferences
- Career exploration, including career research and assessing your financial needs
- Strategies for an effective job search, including how to get organized, complete applications and write an effective resume
- Interviews, including how to prepare, dress, answer questions and follow up
- Developing your Individual Transition Plan (ITP)
- Where you can find further assistance, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Small Business Administration
As part of military transition assistance, servicemembers also have the option of attending one or more training tracks. Each lasts two days and covers a different subject:

- **Accessing Higher Education**, including how to research and compare institutions, finance higher education and achieve academic success
- **Career Technical Training**, including how to select a technical school, prepare an application and meet with VA vocational education counselors
- **Entrepreneurship Training**, including the benefits and challenges of entrepreneurship, the steps required for business ownership and the opportunity to enroll in an eight-week online entrepreneurship course

The Transition GPS curriculum is typically provided in a classroom environment. However, servicemembers who are unable to attend classroom sessions (such as those deployed in remote locations) can access the Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum through Joint Knowledge Online (JKO).

**The Military Life Cycle (MLC) Transition Model**

Transition GPS follows the new Military Life Cycle (MLC) Transition Model, which begins preparing servicemembers for civilian life early. For example, you will receive instruction on the Career Readiness Standards (CRS) long before your intended separation date.

The MLC Transition Model also provides numerous “touch points” during your time in the service that help align your military career with your civilian goals. These typically occur at major junctures such as promotions and deployments. By remaining engaged in this way, your eventual transition becomes the endpoint of a planned and organized progression that enables you to make informed decisions about your personal and professional goals.

**Getting Started**

Preparing to transition from military to civilian life begins while you’re still in uniform. Servicemembers generally get started with these resources:

1. **Pre-Separation Counseling.** Between 12 and 24 months before your separation from the military you will begin the mandatory Pre-Separation Counseling process. You’ll start by completing the Pre-Separation Counseling Checklist, which will familiarize you with the services available during transition. Then you’ll learn about the Individual Transition Plan (ITP), a requirement that helps you lay out a strategy for achieving your civilian career goals.

   Your counseling will also include subjects like education opportunities, employment goals, financial management and relocation.
2. Local TAP Service Centers. TAP service centers are located on most military installations, both in the U.S. and overseas. They have different names depending on which branch of the service you are in:

- Army – Army Career and Alumni Program
- Navy – Navy Transition Assistance Management Program
- Air Force – Air Force Transition Assistance Program
- Marine Corps – Marine Corps’ Transition Assistance Management Program
- Coast Guard – Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program

When you visit the transition assistance office on your installation, you will be able to learn what services they offer, schedule an appointment and enroll in training.

3. Service-Specific Transition Assistance Websites. If your installation does not have a TAP Service Center or accessing one is impractical for some other reason, services are also available online:

- The Army transition assistance program can be accessed at the Army Transition Assistance website
- The Navy transition assistance program can be accessed at the Navy Transition Assistance website
- The Air Force transition assistance program can be accessed at the Air Force Transition Assistance website
- The Marine Corps transition assistance program can be accessed at the Marine Corps Transition Assistance website
- The Coast Guard transition assistance program can be accessed at the Coast Guard Transition Assistance website

TAP and Education

Two of the optional TAP training tracks are education-focused; one on higher education, the other on technical training.

Accessing Higher Education Track

The Accessing Higher Education Training Track is intended for servicemembers who plan on pursuing a college degree after separating from the military. The information it provides is extremely valuable, even if you have already earned college credits while on active duty through the military tuition assistance (TA) program. Attending college as a civilian is different, and this track is an excellent way to prepare for it.
During this 2-day training, you will learn how to:

- Identify your personal education goals
- Research different colleges to find those that meet your needs
- Contact the schools you're interested in
- Apply for admission
- Choose a degree program
- Access your veterans' education benefits
- Find additional support available to veterans in college

When you complete this training track you will have the knowledge you need to create a customized higher education plan that can help you succeed as a civilian college student.

Career Technical Training Track

The Career Technical Training Track is designed for servicemembers who plan on pursuing technical training after separating from the military. Even if you mastered technical skills during active duty, civilian jobs in your field will often require non-military certification or licensure. This track will help you learn what they are and how to acquire them.

During this two-day workshop, you will learn how to:

- Select a technical field
- Learn what licenses or certifications you need to work in that field
- Research different technical schools to find those that meet your needs
- Contact the institutions you're interested in
- Apply for admission
- Schedule a session with a counselor
- Meet individually with technical training experts
- Access your veterans' education benefits
- Find additional support available to veterans in technical school

When you complete this training track you will have the knowledge you need to create a customized technical training plan that can help you succeed in your chosen field.

Completing TAP

The final event of TAP is the Capstone. In Capstone, your commander (or your commander's designees) will verify that you've completed the Transition GPS curriculum, met the Career Readiness Standards and have an acceptable Individual Transition Plan. The goal is to make sure you are prepared for the transition to a civilian career.
If it is determined that you require additional help with your transition, more training opportunities will be provided to you. Additionally, all servicemembers are offered the opportunity of a “warm handover,” which connects you with agencies and organizations that will continue to provide support and services after separation.

**Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP)**

The Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) is designed for servicemembers who are separating from the military with a service-connected disability. It includes all of the regular TAP content – pre-separation counseling, core modules, training tracks, Capstone, etc. – plus additional material specifically for disabled veterans.

The DTAP helps disabled veterans:

- Determine job readiness
- Address individual special needs
- Understand the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program
- Access Vocational Rehabilitation (VocRehab) services
- Receive VA disability benefits sooner through the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) and Quick Start programs

**Further Assistance**

Additional resources are available for those who need further assistance. Some provide more information about TAP and help with preparation for the Transition GPS curriculum:

- The DoDTAP website, which includes some excellent TAP resources and tools
- The TAP resources at the Department of Veterans Affairs
- The DTAP resources at Disability.gov

Other resources can assist servicemembers and veterans in finding the right school or making a better career choice. These may include financial aid resources, specialized academic advising and career counseling designed specifically for veterans. Here are some resources that provide guidance in this area:

- The Best Online Programs for Veterans Rankings from U.S. News & World Report
- The Military Education Benefits Resource Center
- An extensive library of career articles and videos

Finally, some resources are simply good for all veterans to have on hand, as they provide a wealth of knowledge and contact information that can be very important:

- The Department of Veterans Affairs
- The Department of Education, including its Military Families and Veterans resources
- The Department of Labor, including its veterans employment resources