

## **Veterans and Military Families Task Force – Principles**

The purpose of CCD's Veterans Task Force is to illuminate the issues and influence legislation and policies affecting veterans with disabilities.

### **Increase Employment Opportunities and Supports for Veterans with Disabilities**

Veterans with disabilities can and do contribute to our nation as strong and productive employees within the public and private sectors. Specialized employment supports, priority access to services, and affirmative hiring goals and tax incentives are available through federal programs, laws and initiatives to help increase hiring of veteran with disabilities. However, veterans with service-connected disabilities-like individuals with disabilities, generally-are less likely to participate in the labor market than veterans and individuals without disabilities.<sup>1</sup> Congress and the Administration can help improve the employment picture of veterans with disabilities by enhancing military to civilian transition programs, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program through partnership with community employment providers, fully funding and implementing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs, enforcing employment protections and hiring goals set in laws and executive orders, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, Rehabilitation Act (Sec. 503), and Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act, and removing work disincentives in the Department of Veterans Affairs' nonservice-connected pension program.

### **Assure High Quality Health Care for Veterans with Disabilities Inside a Strong VA System and Throughout the Nation's Health Services and Supports Infrastructure**

The health care needs of veterans with disabilities require a strong, reliable VA health care system as well as public and private programs that recognize their status as veterans and people with disabilities. The holistic system of care and specialized services that the VA offers is essential for veterans with disabilities, whether their injuries have been sustained inside or outside their military service. At the same time, these veterans also need the supports and services that enable them to live, work and thrive in their home towns, whether in the form of community-based long term care and mental health treatments to access to alternative therapies. Research is another critical facet to understanding the unique circumstances that affect the health of veterans with disabilities. Finally, policymakers must recognize that families are important components of the health and well-being of veterans with disabilities and ensure that caregivers and dependents are treated equitably under VA and other federal programs.

### **Improve Access to the Supports That Allow Veterans with Disabilities to Successfully Reintegrate Into Their Families and Communities**

Health care, employment opportunities, transportation and housing are all vital to a successful return to home and family for veterans with disabilities. It is crucial that military to civilian transition programs address the particular needs of these veterans. Ensuring access to VA provided grants and transportation services is important but so too is improved access to public and private transportation options, including air travel, transportation networks, and eventually autonomous vehicles. Veterans with disabilities must also have access to affordable, accessible housing. VA's Specially Adaptive Housing

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>

Grant programs need additional staffing support to increase responsiveness. In addition, the programs must be flexible enough to meet the needs of veterans living with relatively static disabilities and those who have rapidly changing conditions. To increase access to housing adaptations for all veterans, policymakers should adopt tax credits and implement and expand programs to increase public private partnerships, including the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program