



How to eMentor Women Veterans and Military Spouses

Background Information

The American Legion Auxiliary holds a special affinity for women veterans and spouses of military servicemembers. Some ALA members are veterans. Other ALA members are, or were once, military spouses. Still others have women veterans and military spouses as family members.

Underemployment and unemployment are common concerns for women veterans and military spouses. Like their male counterparts, some women veterans have difficulty translating their military occupational specialties to the civilian labor market. Others might have a tough time acclimating to civilian workplace cultures. As for military spouses, family relocation due to service members' periodic changes in duty station makes it difficult for spouses to maintain steady employment, leading to resume gaps and skepticism among potential employers. Common careers for military spouses, such as those in the education or health care fields, often require state-specific licensing that does not transfer easily from state to state. Servicemember deployment further complicates the matter, as spouses are often left to balance finances, care for children and adapt to limited practical support from her/his partner.

Several initiatives are underway to address women veteran and military spouse underemployment and unemployment. The American Legion Auxiliary is proud to collaborate with the Business and Professional Women's Foundation Joining Forces Women Veterans and Military Spouses Mentoring Plus program and the Military Spouse Employment Programs of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes initiative. The programs aim to improve the lives of working women veterans and military spouses by helping them achieve upward mobility in the workplace through free online career development tools, resources and confidential guidance. The programs are designed exclusively for women veterans and military spouses.

This publication provides instruction for participation in the Joining Forces Mentoring Plus program. For instructions on participation in the Military Spouse eMentor Program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes initiative, please see our guide titled "How to Collaborate with the Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Employment Program" on the National Security page of www.ALAforVeterans.org.

Serve as an eMentor or as a Subject Matter Expert

The Joining Forces Mentoring Plus program is a dynamic online community where veteran mentees can receive personalized career guidance, advice, support and inspiration from more experienced women veterans, military spouses and professional civilian women in the workforce. Mentors and mentees register and connect online, creating an information and support pipeline for the mentees. While the focus of the mentoring program is job search and career development, mentee spouses and veterans may ask their mentors for assistance with any and all challenges related to military and veteran life.

Volunteer Opportunities for ALA Members

ALA members can sign-up to be either a Subject Matter Expert or an eMentor to a woman veteran or military spouse whether a working woman, a retiree or a stay-at-home mom, ALA members can be an immensely valuable resource for a military spouse or women veteran in need. In addition, ALA members



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often serve as leaders in their communities, and are well-positioned to inform women veterans and military spouses about the availability of the Joining Forces Mentoring Plus program. By encouraging participation, the ALA can ensure that those desiring assistance know how to get it.

Requirements

The amount of time devoted to and the methods of communication utilized in the mentoring relationship will vary in accordance with the needs of the match. You are encouraged to discuss and establish the parameters of your mentoring relationship early. There is no formal time requirement, though mentors must correspond through email with their match at least once a week. You are welcome to be more engaged should you and the match agree; you can talk on the phone or meet in person if both are willing.

The type and manner of your mentoring relationship will vary depending on the mentee's specific needs. While the type of mentor you registered as – corporate, career, or peer – will somewhat determine the relationship, your mentee's needs may not fit cleanly into a label. You can expect to discuss issues such as work-life balance, marriage, family, building a career despite the demands of the military lifestyle, coping with deployment and relocation and other topics common among these women.

Also, the eMentor website has an online forum for mentors and mentees to dialogue with a larger network. These forums provide a channel for women veterans, military spouses and eMentors to talk without a formal mentor-mentee relationship. Mentors and mentees can post questions, request resources and talk about any issues; anyone registered as a mentor or mentee can respond.

eMentor Registration and Matching

Registration as an eMentor or Subject Matter Expert is a quick and easy process. Follow these steps to sign up:

1. Visit www.joiningforcesmentoringplus.org and click "Mentor" or "Subject Matter Expert."
2. Complete the application form with your name, contact information, education and desired areas of assistance.
3. An eMentor staff member will contact you within 24 hours, sending you a link that takes you directly into the program website where you will create an account.

Community Connectors

You can also contribute to the Joining Forces Mentoring Plus program by encouraging others in your community to participate as mentors or mentees.

In order to best serve the participating military spouse and women veteran mentees, the Joining Forces Mentoring Plus program must have a large, diverse pool of volunteer mentors from a variety of industries, companies, careers and organizations. Similarly, potential spouse and women veteran mentees must be aware that the platform exists. Community connectors take simple steps to raise awareness of the program by word of mouth, email messages, newsletter announcements, and social media postings.

Promote ALA and Report Your Impact

The ALA encourages members serving as eMentors and/or Joining Forces Mentoring Plus program community connectors to identify themselves as such. When interacting with mentees, however, it is important that members not push ALA membership aggressively, as that is not the primary need of the



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mentees being assisted. Please do feel free to mention why you value association with The American Legion Family as appropriate.

Please also be sure to report your volunteer activities and hours to your unit's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation chairman, the committee with oversight of ALA's collaboration with the Business and Professional Women's Foundation Joining Forces Mentoring Plus program.

Resources

Business and Professional Women's Foundation Joining Forces Mentoring Plus program:
www.joiningforcesmentoringplus.org