Dispelling the Myths about Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

Fact and Fiction
Introduction
Learning Objectives

Learning Goal: To dispel the myths about Veterans with PTSD

By the end of this training, attendees will:

• Increase their knowledge of the basic diagnosis of PTSD
• Understand current issues surrounding the diagnosis of PTSD
• Learn about the prevalence of mental diagnosis in the workforce
• Dispel common myths about employees with PTSD
• Know when employees/candidates must disclose their diagnosis of PTSD
• Understand strategies for helping employees in the workplace with PTSD
Why This Training Is Important

• As employers you may interview Veterans with PTSD and you may have current employees with this diagnosis

• Therefore, it is important that you understand more about this issue, the myths surrounding it and learn of valuable resources to help you to effectively assimilate a Veteran with PTSD into your workplace environment
Current Considerations

• PTSD – “A Normal Reaction to an Abnormal Situation “

• Difference between Transition Issues and the Diagnosis of PTSD

• Psychiatric Injury vs. Mental Illness

• Physiological vs. Psychiatric Injuries
What is PTSD?

• Now classified as a “trauma and stressor-related disorder” that occurs after exposure to a traumatic or stressful event (DSM V-Diagnostic and Statistical Manual)

• Stress activates immune and defense systems

• The brain interprets the traumatic experience as dangerous

• The brain generates powerful memories
Our Primitive Brain

• Function: survival

• Stores a permanent template of how we survived in a dangerous situation

• Fight-Flight-Freeze response
PTSD Symptom Clusters

• Intrusion

• Alterations in arousal and reactivity

• Avoidance

• Persistent negative alterations in cognition and mood
Prevalence

• 10-18% of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Veterans

• 30% of Vietnam Veterans

• In the civilian sector: 8% at some point in their lives

(Department of Labor Statistics)
PTSD: Fiction

• PTSD is brought on by a weakness in character or moral fiber

• PTSD is not treatable

• All Veterans with PTSD can not handle the stress of a job

• All Veterans with PTSD are violent

• Veterans with PTSD can not be disciplined when they violate performance standards
PTSD: Fact

Veterans with PTSD are not required to disclose their disability unless they need accommodation to perform the essential functions of the job.
PTSD: Fact

• Veterans with PTSD can get better

• There are many effective and available treatments for PTSD

• Veterans who seek help are more likely to get better than those who do not

• Veterans with PTSD bring the same set of skills to the workplace as veterans without PTSD: professionalism, leadership, responsibility, integrity and a strong work ethic
Concerns

1. Can you ask a Veteran about their military service in the interview?
2. Can you ask a Veteran if they have PTSD in the interview?
3. What do you do if a Veteran tells you they have PTSD in the interview?
Question 1

• Asking a Veteran candidate questions related to his/her training, education and service experience is fine. However, unless you are a government agency, deal with Veteran Preference Points, or require a security clearance, you should never ask anything that requires the veteran to give their discharge status.

• Avoid questions pertaining to an applicant’s military status i.e., asking a National Guardsman if they will be deployed soon
Question 2

• Refrain from asking questions that would require a Veteran candidate to disclose any disabilities

• It is encouraged to ask an applicant if they have read the job description and can fulfill the minimum job requirements. However, questioning an applicant on their disability or trying to uncover PTSD or a traumatic brain injury is a direct violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and may also be a violation of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act
Question 3

- Allow the applicant to share their story if they disclose a PTSD or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) diagnosis. Be supportive and do not ask additional questions regarding the condition.

- Make it clear to the applicant as soon as he or she discloses the diagnosis that there is no requirement to make such a disclosure or to discuss the diagnosis.
How to Support Veterans with PTSD in Your Workplace

• Learn more about PTSD
• Be available
• Provide mentorship
• Reduce stimuli and noise as needed
• Provide for medical and counseling appointments as needed
• Provide reminders/checklists as needed
Resources

• Virginia Veteran & Family Support Program, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
• National Center for PTSD www.ncptsd.va.gov
• Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury www.dcoe.health.mil
• Center for Deployment Psychology www.deploymentpsych.org
• National Resource Directory for Wounded Warriors, Veterans and Service members www.nationalresourcedirectory.org
• Ben Shaw: ben.shaw@dvs.virginia.gov, 804-690-3217
Questions?