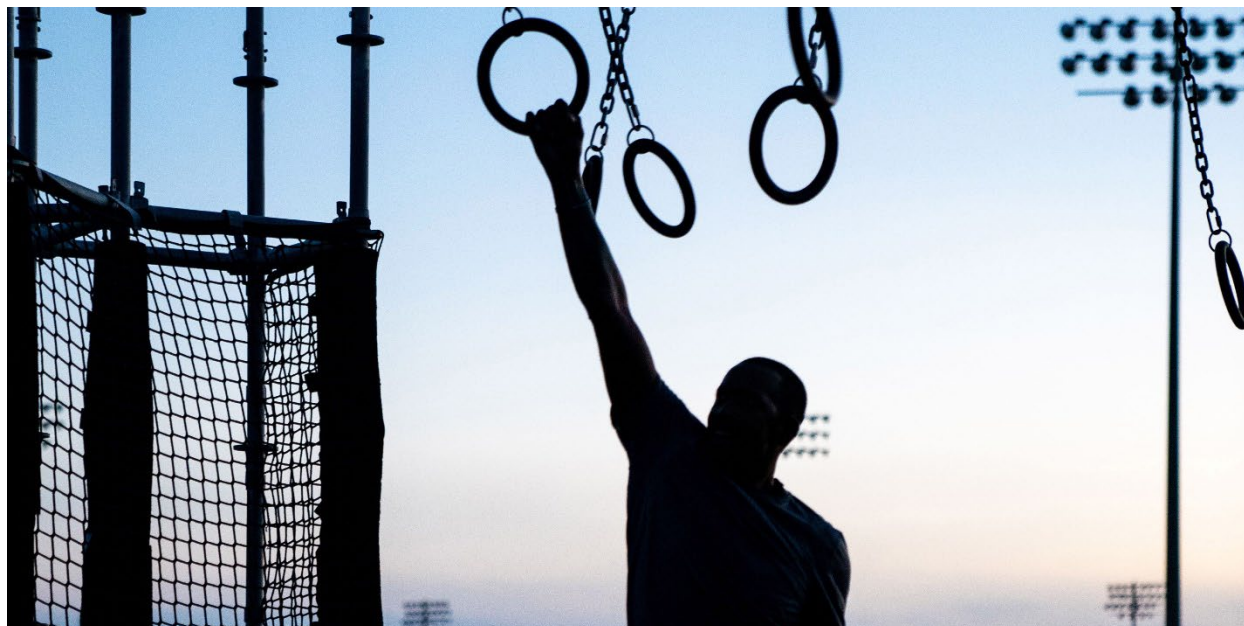


## Military Transition Programs



Transitioning away from military life is a big step, not only for a servicemember, but also for their spouse and children – whether they’ve been a part of the military community for only five years or more than twenty. Fortunately, no one has to prepare for civilian life on their own. The military recognizes that there is a significant adjustment that occurs when leaving the service and therefore offers Transition Assistance Programs (TAPs) to soon-to-be veterans and their families.

[Transition Assistance Programs](#) help separating servicemembers consider alternative careers, write their resumes, prepare financially for the transition, understand their benefits, and prepare for interviews. They also help participants “translate” their military experience to be more readily understood by civilian employers and provide briefings on the VA services that are available after transitioning.

Attending TAP workshops is typically mandatory for separating and retiring servicemembers and there is a standardized curriculum across all branches of service. Programs are typically coordinated by installations’ Family Service Centers, but are facilitated jointly by the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Navy Mutual’s Education and Veterans Services team helps facilitate many of the TAP programs by providing information about finances, transition, and the Survivor Benefit Plan, and can be a resource for those who want more information.

**Note:** Attending TAP workshops is mandatory for servicemembers who have served at least 180 continuous days on active duty, including those who may be transitioning from the Reserves or National Guard.

The transition process varies slightly by branch, but typically servicemembers planning to leave the service begin the transition process at least 12 months ahead of their separation or retirement date. They will be required to first undergo initial counseling with a transition

counselor who can explain the separation process and its requirements and then attend a pre-separation brief. From there, the servicemember is required to attend multiple days of classes put on by the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Labor.

Beyond the classes that are required for all servicemembers, there are also specialty classes that depend on each servicemember's future career. Servicemembers must pick at least one of the following tracks, but may choose to attend multiple: employment (for those who will be job hunting), vocation (for those who want to obtain technical training), education (for those who wish to return to school), or entrepreneurship (for those interested in starting their own business).

Finally, servicemembers are required to attend a TAP capstone no less than 90 days before their separation date. This capstone serves to ensure that all TAP requirements have been completed and that servicemembers meet Department of Defense "career readiness standards" before entering civilian life. Transition counselors will help servicemembers complete their DD Forms 2648 – a checklist of all tasks that need to be completed pre-transition.

Most military installations encourage spouses to attend TAP programs. In the event a spouse cannot attend, they can utilize MySTeP. MySTeP is the Military Spouse Transition Program, and while not mandatory, it provides information and tools to military spouses as their servicemember plans to transition. It is a three-part program. The first two parts focus on joining and thriving in a military community, but the third part, [Stepping Beyond](#), focuses on preparing the family for a transition away from the military. It covers the process of separating, DOD and VA benefits, finances, health care, and employment. Spouses may also access [Transition Employment Assistance for Military Spouses](#) (TEAMS) through the Department of Labor.

In addition to what is offered by each branch of the military, there are other programs available:

- [DOD SkillBridge Program](#): The DOD SkillBridge program provides an opportunity for servicemembers to experience civilian careers through industry training, apprenticeships, and internships. It connects servicemembers to partner employers who can provide experience during servicemembers' final 180 days of military service (with their commander's permission to participate). This training may be valuable in helping servicemembers determine their future career paths and boost their resumes with additional qualifications.
- [Military OneSource](#): Military OneSource offers free consultations to transitioning servicemembers to supplement the required programs through servicemembers' branches of service. Servicemembers and veterans must be within 365 days of separation to be eligible. These consultations last about 45 minutes each and cover topics including goals, benefits, the VA, education, employment, and available online resources.
- [USO Transition Program](#): This program connects separating servicemembers and their spouses with a Transition Specialist who can help them develop an action plan and connect them with resources that can enhance their transitions to civilian life. The USO's Transition Specialist works with each military family to learn about their goals and then



connect them with the relevant resources; they can help with employment assistance, education, finances, and access to veterans' benefits. These services are provided to transitioning families free of charge.

- **VA Transition Assistance Program:** The VA program is often required as part of branch-specific TAPs, but it is available to family members and caregivers as well. Those who wish to learn more about VA benefits and services can take the TAP course online. It covers various VA benefits, including health care, educational benefits, life insurance, home loans, and disability compensation, as well as resources for those who want to maintain their social and emotional health and wellness.

There are many other resources available to transitioning servicemembers – but it's easy to feel overwhelmed when leaving one career for something completely different. There are also additional challenges in navigating the VA benefits, retirement benefits, and other military-specific benefits that separating servicemembers may be eligible for. Navy Mutual's Education and Veterans Services team is available to answer any questions that may arise, and our Veterans Service Organization representatives can help navigate the world of VA claims and survivor benefits.

If you are a separating servicemember, a veteran, or a family member with questions about transitioning, benefits, or finances, our educators can be reached at [888-298-4442](tel:888-298-4442) or [contacted online](#). We're here to help.