



VA program helps service members transition to civilian life

Expiration Term of Service Sponsorship Program shows promising results

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Military life can be full of transitions. From deployments to retirement, these times can bring about both new opportunities and challenges. Active duty service members have long enjoyed the support of sponsors during their military service transitions. But similar support is not provided for the final transition to civilian life.

VA's Expiration Term of Service (ETS) Sponsorship Program is beginning to change that, with promising results.

The program helps transitioning service members secure housing, find jobs, pursue educational opportunities and access mental health support, while also providing support to their families.

When service members execute an ETS or retire from service, there is no individual assigned responsibility for their transition into the civilian world. This transition can be challenging, as service members lose the benefits of military leadership, camaraderie, support and structure.

These losses can lead to increased stressors, a decreased sense of purpose and an elevated risk for suicide and other mental health concerns when service members rejoin the civilian community.

As a result, VA has started collaborating closely with the U.S. Department of Defense; academia, including [Syracuse](#) and [Columbia](#) universities; local governments; and nonprofits, such as American Corporate Partners and ProVetus, to launch the ETS Sponsorship Program.

The ETS Sponsorship Program is available in [New York City](#) and San Antonio. Program leadership plans additional launches in Boston; Charlotte, North Carolina; Dallas; Pittsburgh; Seattle; and Washington, D.C.

In the photo above, ETS sponsors attend a graduation ceremony in New York City.

How does ETS sponsorship work?

After signing up at their military installation, the program matches service members with an ETS sponsor. Sponsors at the service member's identified post-military hometown are selected based on the service member's job interests, gender and other characteristics, interests and needs.

Sponsorship sessions occur virtually until the service member arrives home. Thereafter, thanks to the support of Starbucks, in-person sessions can continue in local Starbucks coffee shops or at other locations in the service member's community. When the meeting is at Starbucks, the restaurant offers complimentary beverages and food.

VA provides certification training for ETS sponsors, enabling them to assist service members with the following:

- Transitioning tasks, such as education, employment, housing, legal support and medical/mental health support.
- Overcoming the stigma that they may associate with seeking mental health support when they need it.
- Connecting to VA and community resources in partnership with [AmericaServes networks](#) and other similar networks in select cities.
- Responding to any signs of possible suicide risk.

How can I get involved?

If you are serving in the military and plan to move to Boston, Charlotte, Dallas, New York City, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, Seattle or Washington after your military service, you can [register to be assigned an ETS sponsor](#) (depending on the progress of the program's expansion). Identify your interest in participating in the ETS Sponsorship Program and indicate the city where you plan to live after your service.

Likewise, if you live in one of the ETS sponsorship program cities and would like to take on the responsibility of becoming an ETS sponsor and helping service members successfully transition, [complete an application here](#).

To access mental health information and resources for transitioning service members, [visit the Transitioning Service Member overview page](#).

To hear Veterans' stories about transitioning from military service, visit the Transitioning From Service page on the [Make the Connection](#) website.