



Enhance Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Benefits Program (VRE)

BACKGROUND

Veterans often struggle during the transition from active duty and returning to their communities often with the decision of what the next chapter of their life holds. One of the most important steps for a veteran's return to civilian life is deciding which career path to pursue and finding and sustaining suitable employment.

Veterans often depend on the GI Bill and the VRE Benefit program at the VA to help them achieve their goals. Specifically, VRE is designed to support veterans with a disability so they can find and maintain suitable employment. The design of this program has been tailored to fit individual veterans; help improve their individual situations and conditions and help them have improved employment outcomes.

However, counselor to veteran ratios are too high and many veterans have reported poor experiences with this benefit program. It is imperative VRE perform better for veterans who depend on the program to achieve employment after service.

VetsFirst Recommendations to Improve VA's VRE Program:

- increase the eligibility requirements to 30% disability with veterans to ensure prioritization is given to veterans in the most need of VRE support;
- install performance incentives to VA counselors to help them ensure veterans benefit from the program;
- increase funding contingent on better outcomes and career progression among the veterans using the program; and
- introduce legislation that would collect survey data from veterans who use VRE to better understand what counselors are doing well and areas in which they may need to improve.

VETSFIRST REQUEST TO POLICYMAKERS

VetsFirst calls on lawmakers to introduce legislation to improve this program so that veterans know more broadly that it exists, utilize it more frequently, and benefit from its services. VRE is rarely recognized as a VA benefit programs despite being just as important as the GI Bill and arguably more important for veterans with disabilities who struggle to maintain employment while they balance their healthcare needs.