

VSST Behavior Overview

Family Support

Family Support behaviors are the things you do for employees and veterans to help them meet their family and personal demands and enable them to have fulfilling lives both at work and outside of work.



Emotional Support & Effective Communication: What you do to help employees and veterans feel listened to, and to show that you know and understand their family and personal demands.

Examples:

- Expressing appreciation of military service and other forms of employee service outside of work
- Expressing curiosity and asking open ended questions about military duty, acquired skills, and drill schedules
- Expressing empathy, understanding, or offering assistance when an employee shares a personal challenge while respecting the differences between military and civilian experiences
- Acknowledging potential struggles of returning veterans whether or not they are explicitly shared
- Celebrating employees family or personal successes and return from extended absences
- Asking how a service member or employee prefers to communicate

Why important for veterans? *Despite the challenging atmosphere and extreme self-reliance valued in the military, the personal connection and support between service members and their supervisors is unparalleled. The loss of this level of genuine concern and engagement can be a struggle for many service members. When expressing empathy or appreciation, it is important to understand the military ethos and communication style so as not to come across as false, overbearing, or patronizing.*



Instrumental Support: Making practical arrangements so employees and veterans can meet both ongoing and unexpected family and personal demands.

Why important for veterans?

A service member's commitment to their military duty is unmatched in the civilian world. While drill schedules are created well in advance, schedule changes occur frequently in addition to attending to personal, family, and medical needs. While a good system of emergency coverage is needed, the service member's military training in time management, self-reliance, and organizational commitment may make him/her a good candidate for an alternative schedule

Examples:

- Adjusting or facilitating work shift schedules to support employees' and veterans ongoing needs
- Finding coverage for employee drill weekends and military commitments in advance
- Rewarding employees who cover shifts or job responsibilities for co-workers in need
- Helping find coverage for employees and veterans who need emergency time off
- Asking about service member's scheduling needs
- Telling employees about existing company resources or policies that support family or personal needs



Win-Win Management: Designing work and policies so employees and veterans can meet BOTH family and work demands, including preparing for short- or long-term leave.

Examples:

- Asking for input about how work can be organized to benefit BOTH company and family or personal priorities
- Developing a military leave and return-to-work plans that address the entire work team and their changing roles
- Developing onboarding plans or return-to-work policies that work for both returning employees and veterans
- Demonstrating an understanding of policies regarding USERRA, EAP, ADA, family and personal leave, tolerance, and harassment

Why important for veterans? Designing work and policies so all employees feel supported during periods of absence and transitions is essential. For service members this involves preparing for leave and transition of responsibilities to support staff, ongoing connection during deployment or leave (if reasonable), and transition of responsibility upon return with respect to changes in the employee's or veteran's physical, mental and scheduling needs as a result of deployment or leave. The plan should look at your staff as a whole and respect the needs of service members, as well as the employees who cover shifts or job responsibilities.



Role Modeling: Demonstrating by example that you care about family and personal priorities, and arranging your work so you can meet family and personal priorities.

Why important for veterans? A powerful way to demonstrate that you value employee's and veteran's non-work priorities, is to serve as a role model of healthy work-life behaviors yourself. A supportive supervisor acknowledges their own personal and non-work priorities, while also respecting the gap between veteran and civilian experiences. Because of the strong military culture and esprit de corps, often the best resource for a veteran, both emotionally and professionally, is another veteran. However, modeling concern for and appreciation of outside work roles will feel supportive to both veterans and employees alike

Examples:

- Sharing a family or personal priority or event of your own with an employee
- Model curiosity about military service and other forms of service outside of work
- Taking time off to attend to non-work matter, like child's event, and sharing what you are doing
- Planning vacation or time off with family or friends, and sharing what you are doing

Performance Support

Performance Support behaviors are the things you do that help employees accomplish their work results and have a fulfilling work life.



Measurement & Direction: Things you do that let employees and veterans know WHAT is expected of them, such as setting goals and measuring results.

Examples:

- Setting a goal or sharing a clear and measurable expectation
- Identifying responsibility for tasks
- Creating clear structure and timelines
- Engaging service members in roles that allow them to continue using skills acquired during military service
- After providing direction or expectations, allowing employees and veterans to take initiative and show self-direction in meeting those expectations

Why important to veterans? Coming from the clear and organized military model, the lack of structure in the civilian workplace can frustrate service members, causing them to disengage. These are things you do that let employees know WHAT is expected of them, such as setting goals and measuring results.



Feedback & Coaching: Guiding communication that ensures employees and veterans know HOW to produce work results, and that they know when they have done well.

Why important to veterans? The military relies on the job training and teaches skills by allowing service members to observe, engage, and receive feedback immediately. Service members do not always see the lack of prior experience or differing experiences as a barrier.

Examples:

- Providing praise for a good idea or work result
- Giving feedback or asking about feedback about performance data, progress towards goals, or the quality of work results
- Setting clear standards for evaluation and for advancement
- Teaching employees a technical skill or work strategy, have the employee practice, and provide feedback to the employee
- Asking about and utilizing skills acquired during military training
- Demonstrate understanding of military work structure and hierarchy



Providing Resources: Providing equipment or materials that employees and veterans need to produce work results, and removing obstacles to productivity.

Examples:

- Providing training, equipment, time, software, etc. that helps employees get their work done
- Asking an employee about the adequacy of their equipment, tools, or resources and providing help when needed
- Accommodating changing resource needs as service members reintegrate
- Pitching in to assist employees with a task when requested
- Providing support or tools that employees need to get their work accomplished
- Facilitating professional connections between veterans or between employees with similar long-term goals.
- Asking “What can I do to help you get your job done?”

Why important for veterans? All employees benefit from and appreciate having quality tools to get their job done. In addition, supervisors can play a key role in connecting employees and veterans with social resources that enhance their professional network and work results. Sometimes this type of support involves removing red tape or barriers to productivity.



Health Protection: What you do to protect employee health and well-being, including removing or reducing physical injury hazards and psychological stressors in the workplace.

Why important for veterans?

Employers are responsible for providing a safe work environment, and the first priority is to protect employees from exposure to known safety and health hazards. Another responsibility is to make accommodations for employees with unique circumstances. Service members may be exposed to highly stressful and dangerous conditions during deployments, and must place great trust in their leaders to make wise and protective decisions type of support involves removing red tape or barriers to productivity.

Examples:

- Talking with an employee or veteran about the known safety and health hazards of their work, including ergonomics for office staff
- Talking with an employee about the importance of safety, or demonstrate how to accomplish a task as safely as possible
- Removing or control physical safety hazards, such as slip, trip, and fall hazards
- Removing or controlling psychological hazards, such as addressing ways to reduce negativity and stigmas in the workplace
- If a disability is shared with you, seeking out reading or training so you better understand needs for employees or veterans with physical, cognitive, or mental health disabilities
- Providing accommodations for employees experiencing deployment or return-to-work related challenges (work assignments, frequent movement, changing the noise level or lighting, etc.)
- Asking an employee about the adequacy or comfort of their work area in general, but especially following a deployment or return-to-work