What should employers do if they suspect an employee is struggling with the effects of TBI and/or PTSD?

Employers must realize that, since they hire veterans with disabilities, they are not alone. A wealth of support services exist to help them respond to the unique needs of their employees with disabilities or combat-related injuries. If available, a company’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a good place to seek counseling and assistance for workers struggling with TBI, PTSD and other disabilities. To learn about the types of workplace accommodations they should implement, employers can call the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a free consulting service that provides individualized workplace accommodation solutions and technical assistance regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other disability-related legislation. Just call 800-526-7234. Other support services abound. The America’s Heroes at Work site features links to a wide variety of organizations and supports, as well as educational resources on accommodations and promising employment practices.

Why should employers hire disabled veterans?

Veterans make excellent employees for a variety of reasons (including leadership, teamwork experiences and their accelerated learning curve). In addition, there are often tax incentives available to help employers cover the cost of accommodations for employees with disabilities and to make their places of business accessible. Of course, hiring veterans with disabilities is simply the right thing to do. To learn more, read the America’s Heroes at Work fact sheets on incentives for hiring veterans and people with disabilities and visit www.hireVetsFirst.gov.

Downloadable fact sheets include:
- Frequently Asked Questions About TBI & Employment
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- Dispelling the Myths About PTSD
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- Promising Practices for Supporting Returning Service Members with TBI/PTSD: Job Coaching, Workplace Mentoring, Natural Workplaces Supports and Customized Employment
- Hiring Veterans with TBI/PTSD: Tips and Duties for Employees and Hiring Managers
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- Employee and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Myth vs. Facts

The America’s Heroes at Work Web site educates employers and workforce development professionals on ways to help employees with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) succeed on the job. It features:
- Easy-to-understand fact sheets and reference guides
- Web-based training tools
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- Helpful links to information related to TBI, PTSD and veterans/disability employment issues
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What should employers expect from National Guard and Reservists who return to their jobs with TBI and/or PTSD? Though TBI and PTSD are the signature injuries of the Global War on Terror, it is possible that many National Guard and Reservists will return to their civilian jobs with these conditions. However the effects of TBI and PTSD vary widely from person to person depending on the severity of an injury or traumatic experience. To educate yourself, read through the free materials on www.AmericasHeroesAtWork.gov.

Are TBI and PTSD conditions that are exclusive to veterans? TBI and PTSD are not unique to veterans; in fact, these conditions can affect anyone. Although their injuries may not be visible, employers should know that any employees with TBI and/or PTSD are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Veterans and non-veterans with TBI and/or PTSD may both experience symptoms such as mild concussions as opposed to severe, debilitating TBI. Veterans with TBI, PTSD and other invisible conditions succeed on the job. America’s Heroes at Work is a targeted education campaign designed to increase awareness of TBI and PTSD in the workplace. Most symptoms will decrease over time. People by and large recover from TBI.
What is TBI? A Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the normal functioning of the brain. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in TBI. The severity of such an injury may range from "mild concussion" (i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness) to "severe" (i.e., a prolonged period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury). A TBI can result in short or long term problems, although most people with TBI are able to function independently.

What should employers expect from a person with PTSD? Will they have violent outbursts? PTSD does develop in different people. Some returning service members with PTSD suffer from more symptoms than others. Common symptoms include irritability, self-destructive behavior, anger, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and difficulty concentrating. PTSD symptoms can interfere with everyday activities inside and outside of the workplace. What symptoms will decrease over time? People by and by themselves or others. Employees who manage their symptoms through medication or psychotherapy are very unlikely to pose a threat. Employers may help reduce the overall stress in the work environment or mitigate the immediate effects of PTSD. There's no "right" time or way to engage an individual with PTSD.

What is PTSD? Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that can develop in response to exposure to an extreme traumatic event. These traumatic events may include military combat, violent personal assault (e.g., rape, mugging, robbery), natural or man-made disasters, or horrific accidents. The event directly exposes the person to severe stress. PTSD symptoms can interfere with everyday activities inside and outside of the workplace. The event directly exposes the person to severe stress. PTSD symptoms can interfere with everyday activities inside and outside of the workplace.

Employment plays a vital role in the recovery of people with PTSD and TBI. Employment helps to reduce stress and alleviate some of the symptoms associated with PTSD and TBI. Employment provides a valuable social role in our society and can help reduce feelings of isolation. Employment can also provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Employment can also provide a sense of purpose and fulfill one's needs. Employment can also provide a sense of purpose and fulfill one's needs.

What should employers expect from National Guard and Reservists who return to their jobs with TBI and/or PTSD? As a veteran with TBI and/or PTSD, to fully participate in society. For example, employment provides income that can be used to support individuals with PTSD and TBI. Employment can also provide a sense of purpose and fulfill one's needs. Employment can also provide a sense of purpose and fulfill one's needs.

What happens after TBI and/or PTSD? The symptoms of PTSD vary widely from person to person depending upon the severity of the injury or trauma. The symptoms may appear immediately after the trauma or may develop months, even years, after the trauma has occurred. Some of the symptoms associated with PTSD are:

- Nightmares
- Painful memories
- Flashbacks
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Feeling on edge
- Exaggerated startle response

What are the possible behaviors associated with PTSD? PTSD can cause a variety of behaviors that can interfere with everyday activities inside and outside of the workplace. Some possible behaviors associated with PTSD include:

- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Avoidance of situations that trigger memories
- Sensitivity to loud noises
- Difficulty sleeping

What are the common employer questions about TBI & PTSD? There's a lot of stigma associated with PTSD. But employers needn't be nervous. In addition, they might try easing into veterans' employment, offering short-term internships with the possibility of permanent employment, natural workplace supports, and simple physical accommodations such as alarm clocks, task lists and alternate schedules. Learn more by reviewing the fact sheets & reference materials on www.AmericasheroesAtWork.gov.
America’s Heroes at Work is a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) initiative that focuses on the employment challenges of veterans living with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The project equips employers and the workforce development system with the tools they need to help employees affected by TBI and/or PTSD succeed in the workplace – particularly service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. 

To learn more, visit the America’s Heroes at Work Web site.

What is TBI? A Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or an impact to the body that causes brain trauma. The severity of such an injury may range from "mild concussions" (i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness) to "severe," (i.e., an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury). A TBI can result in short or long-term problems, although most people with TBI are able to function independently.

Are all TBI cases severe? No. TBI is an umbrella term that spans a wide continuum of symptoms and severity. In fact, the large majority (80%) of combat-related injuries sustained in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom are mild concussions as opposed to severe, debilitating TBI.

What is PTSD? Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that can develop in response to exposure to an extreme traumatic event. These traumatic events may include military conflict, violent personal assault, rape, major trauma, robbery, terrorist attack, sexual or non-sexual assault, or horrific accidents. The event directly experienced or witnessed in another person may also trigger a reaction. PTSD usually emerges within three months of the traumatic event, though symptoms may emerge months or years following a traumatic event.

What should employers expect from a person with PTSD? Will they have violent outbursts? PTSD does develop in different people. Some returning veterans may experience a re-emergence of symptoms such as flashbacks to combat, nightmares, etc. Others may not experience any "PTSD" symptoms ever again.

What promising practices can DOL recommend to employers who might be hesitant to hire a veteran with TBI and/or PTSD? It is possible that many National Guard and Reservists will return to their civilian jobs with these conditions. However, the visibility of TBI and PTSD vary widely from person to person, depending on the severity of anxiety or trauma experienced. To educate yourself read through the free materials on www.AmericasHeroesAtWork.gov.

Who are TBI and PTSD cases that are exclusive to veterans? TBI and PTSD are often co-occurring conditions that are exclusive to veterans! The symptoms that define PTSD can emerge anywhere in one’s life, and can be precipitated by a traumatic event. However, PTSD is a psychiatric condition that is not always triggered by combat trauma. In fact, many people with PTSD have not served in the military. In many cases trauma exposure is related to civilian life. Whether military or civilian trauma exposure, PTSD can impact anyone. Many people who have served in the military do not develop PTSD, and many civilians experience PTSD symptoms. What makes PTSD unique is the duration of symptoms. People by and large considering a diagnosis of PTSD must not have a direct trauma to themselves or others. Employers must manage symptoms through treatment or medication, not just on the job. Employees who manage their symptoms through treatment or medication can still fully contribute to the organization.

What are some possible behaviors associated with PTSD? There’s a lot of stigma associated with PTSD. How can employers separate myth from reality? The stigmas of PTSD are a fact about the American War on Terror. It is possible that every National Guard and Reservists will return with their civilian job with these conditions. However, the visibility of TBI and PTSD vary widely from person to person, depending on the severity of anxiety or trauma experienced. To educate yourself read through the free materials on www.AmericasHeroesAtWork.gov.

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