

PROMISING PRACTICES



Warrior Bridge: Services for injured veterans and their families increase employment success

"It makes me feel good to see that somebody outside of the military really cares about the effect that services for veterans has on troops and their families."

Words like these from wounded veterans continually inspire staff members at [ServiceSource](#), a not-for-profit organization with regional offices and programs in nine states and the District of Columbia.

After serving their country overseas, thousands of servicemen and women reenter civilian life each year with significant mental health issues and physical injuries, which affect their ability to obtain and maintain competitive employment.

Responding to this national concern, ServiceSource formed [Warrior Bridge](#) to help injured veterans to find employment and integrate into their communities. The Warrior Bridge program focuses especially on the unique needs of servicemen and women returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. ServiceSource itself employs more than 200 veterans -- 123 of them with injuries.

In its most recent [CARF](#) survey report, the ServiceSource regional office in Clearwater, Florida, received an exemplary for being "one of the first organizations in the United States to recognize and address the employment needs of returning veterans with disabilities." A three-year partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs enabled this regional office's Warrior Bridge program to serve 162 veterans with disabilities and place 72 of them in community employment.

Supports beyond employment through partnerships

Veterans need a combination of services to successfully transition into their communities. To assist them, Warrior Bridge services include job

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About the ECS Promising Practices newsletter series

An organization receiving exemplary recognition in its CARF survey report stands out because of its professional and strategic response to a service or business need. CARF presents these ECS Promising Practices articles to encourage dialogue among service providers and to offer examples of creative solutions for improving service quality.

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Issues are categorized by topic -- Business Practices, Community Services, and Employment Services.

placement, temporary financial assistance to remove barriers to employment, housing assistance for homeless veterans, family support, basic living needs, and linkages to other support services.

Warrior Bridge partners with nearby U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals, local U.S. Department of Labor veterans' representatives, corporate partners such as Home Depot®, and local veterans organizations to provide:

- *Employment and Support* -- Employment specialists work directly with veterans to improve interviewing skills and to help transition military skills to a civilian résumé. Employment specialists also provide veterans with other support as needed, including financial literacy training and support for veterans' families.
- *Housing* -- Through coordination with specialized U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers, Warrior Bridge assists homeless veterans to obtain housing.
- *Stipends* -- One-time financial assistance stipends provide security deposits, utilities, and/or living expenses for veterans with injuries who are transitioning home.
- *Veterans' Mall* -- A storeroom of household necessities provides home appliances, cookware, business attire, and other items that have been donated by the community.

A veteran's declaration brings the work of ServiceSource home: "I feel like they [Warrior Bridge employment specialists] are members of my family."



Above: Wounded Warrior new hires at ServiceSource include, left to right, Shawn Odoms (computer specialist), Scott Owens (general clerk), Luke Lafko (computer specialist), and Ernso Auguste (computer specialist).

Below: The Veterans' Mall provides veterans with injuries, many of them homeless, with household necessities and clothing to help them achieve self-sufficiency.



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