

PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS AND ELIGIBLE SPOUSES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy provides the guidance and establishes the procedures regarding the priority of service requirement for veterans and their eligible spouses for U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded programs and services. This policy applies to all recipients and subrecipients of *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)* Title I and Title III funding and is effective immediately.

This policy contains no state-imposed requirements.

This Directive finalizes Workforce Services Draft Directive *Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses (WSDD-191)*, issued for comment on November 30, 2018. The Workforce Development Community submitted four comments during the draft comment period. A summary of comments, including all changes, is provided as Attachment 1.

This policy supersedes Workforce Services Directive *Final Rule on Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses (WSD08-10)*, dated June 29, 2009. Retain this Directive until further notice.

REFERENCES

- WIOA (Public Law 113-128) Sections 3(5), 3(36), and 3(50), and 134
- *Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006* (Public Law 109-461)
- *Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) of 2002* (Public Law 107-288)
- Title 38 *United States Code* (U.S.C.) Sections 101(2), 4213, and 4215(a), and Chapters 11, 13, 15, 30-31, 33, and 35-36.
- Title 20 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 1010: "Priority of Service for Covered Persons"
- Title 20 CFR Sections 680.600, 680.650, and 683.230

The EDD is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

- Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) [19-16](#), Subject: *Guidance on Services provided through the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs under the WIOA and the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services, as amended by Title III of WIOA, and for implementation of the WIOA Final Rules* (March 1, 2017)
- TEGL [26-13](#), Subject: *Impact of the U.S. Supreme Court’s Decision in United States v. Windsor on Eligibility and Services Provided Under Workforce Grants Administered by the Employment and Training Administration* (June, 18, 2014)
- TEGL [10-09](#), Subject: *Implementing Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses in all Qualified Job Training Programs Funded in whole or part by DOL* (November 10, 2009)
- Workforce Services Directive [WSD15-14 \(PDF\)](#), Subject: *WIOA Adult Program Priority of Service* (January 22, 2016)

BACKGROUND

On November 7, 2002, President Bush signed the JVA into law to revise and improve employment, training, and job placement services furnished to veterans. Section 2(a) of the Act mandates priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses “who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for participation” in DOL programs.

The JVA, and the priority of service it requires, acknowledges the sacrifices of the men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Priority of service honors veterans and eligible spouses as our “heroes at home” and provides clear entry points into high-growth, high-wage civilian jobs, and easily accessible post-secondary education and training to support their advancement along career pathways. Veterans and eligible spouses possess unique attributes and contribute greatly in the workplace. They are an important source of highly skilled and experienced talent and play an important role in regional workforce development strategies.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Definitions

The definitions listed below are for the purposes of implementing priority of service only. The definitions of “veteran” and “eligible spouse” applicable to the priority of service requirement are different from, and broader than, than the definitions of “veteran” and “other eligible persons” applicable to services provided by the Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans’ Employment Representative staff.

Covered Person – a veteran or eligible spouse.

Eligible Spouse – the spouse (including the same-sex spouse) of any of the following:

- a. Any veteran who died of a service-connected disability.
- b. Any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days:
 - i. Missing in action.
 - ii. Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force.
 - iii. Forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power.
- c. Any veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, as evaluated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
- d. Any veteran who died while a disability, as indicated in category c. of this definition, was in existence.

A spouse whose eligibility is derived from a living veteran or service member (i.e., categories b. or c. above) would lose his or her eligibility if the veteran or service member were to lose the status that is the basis for the eligibility (e.g., if a veteran with a total service-connected disability were to receive a revised disability rating at a lower level), or upon divorce from the veteran or service member.

Note: A surviving spouse who is a widow or widower AND remarries on or after December 16, 2003, AND on or after attaining age 57, is entitled to continue to receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

Non-covered Person – any individual who neither meets the definition of veteran nor the definition of eligible spouse.

Point of Entry – the point at which a veteran or eligible spouse expresses an interest in receiving employment, training, and placement services. It may be in-person or online, and can include physical locations such as reception areas, resource areas, and self-service kiosks in an America's Job Center of CaliforniaSM (AJCC), as well as websites such as [CalJOBSSM](#), and other virtual service delivery resources.

Priority of Service – with respect to any qualified job training program, a covered person shall be given priority over a non-covered person for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under that program, notwithstanding any other provision of the law. Such priority includes giving access to such services to a covered person before a non-covered person or, if resources are limited, giving access to such services to a covered person instead on a non-covered person.

Program Operator – a recipient or subrecipient of DOL funds for a qualified job training program.

Qualified Job Training Program – any program or service for workforce preparation, development, or delivery that is directly funded, in whole or in part by the DOL.

Recipient – an entity that is awarded federal financial assistance, in whole or in part, directly from the DOL or through a subaward for any qualified job training program.

Subrecipient – an entity that is awarded federal financial assistance through a subaward funded by the DOL for any qualified job training program.

Veteran – a person who served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Active service includes full-time duty in the National Guard or a Reserve component, other than full-time duty for training purposes. Active service does not include full-time active duty performed by National Guard personnel who are mobilized by state rather than federal authorities.

Priority of Service

Program operators are required to provide priority of service to veterans and eligible spouses for all WIOA and Wagner-Peyser funded activities, including technology–assisted activities. Priority of service means that veterans and eligible spouses are entitled to take precedence over non-covered persons in obtaining employment, training, and placement services. More specifically, a veteran or an eligible spouse either receives access to a service earlier in time than a non-covered person or, if the resource is limited, the veteran or eligible spouse receives access to the service instead of or before the non-covered person.

In implementing priority of service, program operators must ensure veterans and eligible spouses receive basic career services and individualized career services before other non-covered individuals. Additionally, they must ensure veterans and eligible spouses receive first priority on waiting lists for training slots, and are enrolled in training prior to non-covered persons. However, once a non-covered participant is enrolled in a workshop or training class, priority of service is not intended to allow a veteran or eligible spouse to bump the non-covered participant from that class or service.

Program operators must ensure that priority of service is applied by all subrecipients of DOL funds. Pertinent language should be included in contracts, subgrants, solicitations for proposals, memorandums of understanding, and other service provision agreements.

Applying Priority of Service

The application of priority of service varies depending on the eligibility requirements of the particular program. There are four basic categories of DOL-funded programs: universal access programs, programs that require participants to meet specified eligibility criteria, programs with statutory priorities, and programs with discretionary priorities. The following describes how priority of service applies to these basic types of programs.

Universal Access Programs

For workforce programs that operate or deliver services to the public as a whole without targeting specific groups (e.g., WIOA basic career services), veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service over all other program participants.

Programs with Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria identify basic conditions that each participant in a specific program is required to meet. For example, for the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, every participant is required to meet program eligibility requirements (e.g., age, selective service registration, etc.). A veteran or eligible spouse must first meet all of the eligibility criteria in order to be considered eligible for participation in the program. Once determined eligible for participation, the veteran or eligible spouse receives priority for participation in the program and receipt of services.

Programs with Statutory Priorities

In addition to the eligibility criteria that all participants are required to meet, some programs have priorities that target certain populations and establish a rank order for enrolling or serving participants (e.g., the WIOA priority for Adult funds to serve recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient). While veterans' priority is required under federal law and cannot be waived, it is not intended to displace existing eligibility requirements and statutory priorities. Therefore, in these instances, veterans and eligible spouses must first meet both the program's eligibility and statutory priority criteria to receive priority for participation in the program and receipt of services. Program operators must determine the status of each individual veteran or eligible spouse and apply priority of service in the following order:

1. Veterans and eligible spouses who meet the program's statutory priority requirement (e.g., veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, other low income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient).
2. Non-covered persons who meet the program's statutory priority requirement (e.g., non-covered persons who are recipients of public assistance, other low income

individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient).

3. Veterans and eligible spouses who do not meet the program's statutory priority requirement.
4. Priority populations established by the Governor and/or Local Workforce Development Board.
5. Non-covered persons outside the program's statutory priority requirement.

Programs with Discretionary Priorities

Programs with discretionary priorities may make an effort to provide a certain level of service to a particular group. However, the law does not mandate that the target group be served before other eligible individuals. With respect to priority of service, the only feature that distinguishes discretionary targeting programs from universal access programs is the additional application of the discretionary targeting criterion to non-covered persons. Therefore, program operators must apply priority of service in the order below:

1. Veterans and eligible spouses.
2. Non-covered persons within the discretionary targeting group.
3. Non-covered persons outside the discretionary targeting group.

Income Eligibility Requirements

When determining eligibility for programs that have a statutory requirement to serve low-income individuals, many types of military service-related income are exempt. Specifically, the following pay, financial allowances, and financial benefits must be disregarded for veterans, transitioning service members, or any other individuals for whom these amounts would normally be applied in making an eligibility determination.

- Military pay or allowances paid while on active duty.
- Military pay or allowances paid by the VA for vocational rehabilitation, disability payments, or related VA-funded programs (including the VA work study allowance), and including any financial benefits received under the following chapters of Title 38 U.S.C.:
 - Chapter 11 - Compensation for service-connected disability or death.
 - Chapter 13 - Dependency and indemnity compensation for service-connected deaths.
 - Chapter 30 - All-volunteer force educational assistance program.
 - Chapter 31 - Training and rehabilitation for veterans with service-connected disabilities.
 - Chapter 33 – Post-9/11 educational assistance.
 - Chapter 35 - Survivors' and dependents' educational assistance.
 - Chapter 36 - Administration of educational benefits.

- Any benefits received under Title 10 U.S.C. Chapter 106 - Educational assistance for members of the selected reserve.

In contrast, the following types of military-related income are included in low-income calculations:

- Pension payments authorized by Title 10 U.S.C., such as those received by military retirees, whether or not their retirement was based on disability.
- Pension benefits paid under Title 38 U.S.C. Chapter 15 – Pensions for low-income, wartime veterans who are disabled for reasons not connected or related to their military service.

It is also important to note that VA benefits for education and training services do not constitute “other grant assistance” under WIOA’s eligibility requirements. Therefore, veterans or eligible spouses who are eligible for the GI Bill or other forms of VA-funded education or training are not required to coordinate their entitlement to those benefits with their eligibility for WIOA-funded training, as stipulated under 20 CFR Section 680.230. Specifically, program operators may not require veterans or eligible spouses to exhaust their entitlement to VA-funded training prior to enrolling them in WIOA-funded training.

Identifying Veterans and Eligible Spouses

Program operators must put processes into place to ensure that veteran and eligible spouses are identified at the point of entry and given an opportunity to take full advantage of priority of service. The point of entry includes physical locations such as AJCCs, as well as websites such as [CalJOBSSM](#), and other virtual service delivery resources. These processes should ensure that veterans and eligible spouses are aware of their entitlement to priority of service, the full array of employment, training, and placement services available under priority of service, any applicable eligibility requirements for those programs and services, and in cases of online points of entry, how to access assistance via the nearest America’s Job Center of CaliforniaSM.

Documenting Eligibility for Priority of Service

It is not necessary for staff to verify the status of a veteran or eligible spouse until the individual undergoes eligibility determination and is enrolled in a WIOA individualized career service or training service. Until the point at which the participant receives an individualized career service or training service, an individual who states they meet the veterans’ priority eligibility criteria must be accorded veterans’ priority of service on the basis of self-attestation.

In those instances in which eligibility determination and enrollment in a WIOA individualized career service occur at the point of entry, a covered person must be enrolled, provided

immediate priority, and permitted to follow-up subsequently with any required verification of his or her status as a covered person.

Local Policy and Procedures

Program Operators must establish policy and procedures for implementing priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses within existing service delivery strategies. Local policies must ensure that veteran and eligible spouses are identified at the point of entry and given an opportunity to take full advantage of priority of service. These policies must ensure that veterans and eligible spouses are aware of their entitlement to priority of service, the full array of employment, training, and placement services available under priority of service, and any applicable eligibility requirements for those programs and/or services. Additionally, program operators must ensure that written copies of local priority of service policies are maintained at all service delivery points and, to the extent practicable, posted in a way that makes it possible for members of the general public to easily access them.

ACTION

Please bring this directive to the attention of all relevant parties.

INQUIRIES

If you have any questions, contact your [Regional Advisor](#).

/s/JAIME L. GUTIERREZ, Chief
Central Office Workforce Services Division

Attachments are available on the internet:

[Summary of Comments \(PDF\)](#)