

## **Section 1 – Identification**

Evansville-Area Human Resource Association

## **Section 2 – Executive Summary**

The Evansville-Area Human Resource Association (EHRA) partnered with the Indiana Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to provide the “Seamless Transition” program to assist military personnel with a seamless transition to the civilian workforce. In 2009, EHRA provided career counseling services; assisting 500 immobilized military personnel in identifying transferable skills, developing resumes, and interview preparation. EHRA’s career counseling initiatives have proven invaluable to military personnel, many of whom have never prepared a resume or interviewed for civilian employment. EHRA connected these highly skilled and dedicated prospective employees to local employers through the Army’s Employer Partnership Initiative and Indiana Guard’s job posting websites. Through these partnerships EHRA member employers have been asked to identify the certifications employers’ demand which resulted in the military offering certification opportunities to military personnel to facilitate their future transition to civilian employment. The ESGR believes so strongly in the benefits of the “Seamless Transition” program that all immobilized military personnel are required to participate. The ESGR and Army’s Employer Partnership Initiative describe their partnership with EHRA as the model to be adopted in other states because they could not provide a full range of employment services without support from local HR professionals.

## **Section 3 – Questions**

1. Why was this program created?

The EHRA initiated partnerships with the ESGR, Army and Indiana National Guard as a workforce readiness initiative based on a desire to support military personnel returning from active service with career counseling services. In doing so, we learned that the Army also recognized the importance of stabilizing a soldier’s life by helping soldiers gain civilian employment; however, the amount of Human Resources support necessary to accomplish this objective does not exist today. The military is hiring personnel with the goal of improving placement and reducing unemployment among its soldiers. However, the support and participation of local HR professionals is vital to ensure that all military personnel returning from active service have the support necessary to effectively transition to civilian employment.

2. Who participated in the implementation of your program?

Today EHRA has partnered with three separate organizations to facilitate this workforce readiness initiative: the ESGR a Department of Defense organization that seeks to promote a culture in which all American employers support and value to military service of their employees, the Army through their Employer Partnership Initiative and the Indiana National Guard. Through these workforce readiness initiatives EHRA member volunteers provide career counseling services including transferable skill identification, resume preparation, mock interviews and ongoing career mentoring to military personnel transitioning to civilian employment.

3. How was the program implemented?

In addition to providing career counseling services, this multi faceted initiative provides opportunities for employers to demonstrate their support for the military service of their employees, educates employers on the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) requirements, and provides opportunities for employers to network with military personnel.

The ESGR partnered with EHRA to provide the "Seamless Transition" program. The ESGR believes so strongly in the benefits of the "Seamless Transition" program that all immobilized military personnel are required to participate. This program provides the opportunity for military personnel who are returning from active service to speak with representatives from the ESGR, Veterans Affairs, EHRA and other organization who offer support to military personnel. The "Seamless Transition" program connects immobilized military personnel to EHRA member volunteers who provide career counseling services including transferable skill identification, resume preparation, and mock interviews. EHRA member volunteers obtain contact information from immobilized military personnel and provide ongoing career mentoring to assist with transition to civilian employment.

The EHRA coordinated and participated in two Statement of Support signing ceremonies for the ESGR; May 2007 and June 2009. EHRA encouraged member employers to sign a Statement of Support. Employers who sign a Statement of Support agree to recognize, honor and enforce USERRA; ensure their managers and supervisors have the tools they need to effectively manage employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve; and agree to continually recognize and support our country's service members and their families in peace, in crisis and in war.

During the ESGR Statement of Support ceremony on June 26, 2009, General Umbarger presented the Statement of Support and a coin to those employers showing their support for the Guard and Reserve. Following the ceremony, the ESGR held a golf scramble where ESGR employees, local employers and their service members played golf together. EHRA provided educational signage for the golf scramble. The signage provided a USERRA Tip or Frequently Asked Question at each hole to educate employers and service members about USERRA during this networking event.

To further our efforts to educate local employers, the EHRA has coordinated a seminar in Evansville to be held May of 2010. The EHRA has arranged for the ESGR to present USERRA and other employment laws governing service members, such as FMLA, at the Small Business Development Center. This will give small business owners and operators, without a dedicated HR professional, an opportunity to better understand the obligations of USERRA and to find out what resources are available through the ESGR.

Through our newsletter and website, the EHRA encourages member employers to utilize the Army's Employer Partnership Initiative to recruit military personnel transitioning to civilian employment. The Employer Partnership Initiative exists to link employers with soldiers to create a stronger workforce for the Army and for civilian employers. The Chief of the Army Reserve created the Employer Partnership Initiative as a collaborative effort that will sustain an operational Army Reserve, capable of caring for soldiers and their families, and provide employers with a no-cost link to highly skilled soldiers.

In partnership with the Army Reserve, businesses and governmental agencies can access hundreds of thousands of talented soldiers to meet their staffing needs. Employer job opportunities can be posted using the Employer Partnership job database website. Potential employees applying for these openings have been pre-screened and fully trained in the technical, specialized and professional capabilities employers need. The opportunity for employer partners to hire from a skilled labor force has the potential to reduce recruiting and training costs.

Through this program, the Army is gaining feedback from employers on what training and certifications best fit their business needs and are adapting the military education programs to fit these needs. The Army's Employer Partnership Initiative seeks regular feedback from employers on what type of instruction can be offered in the military to better qualify immobilized soldiers for civilian employment. The EHRA will continue to encourage its HR professionals to join this program because we have learned from those participating how valuable it can be. For example, the Army's Regional Representative recently visited an Evansville employer, and subsequently asked the parent company's CEO to join its healthcare education panel to review

the certification process for Army and civilian healthcare providers. Aligning these healthcare certification processes may result in additional Evansville soldiers becoming employed in our area at the proper skill level. The Chief of the Army Reserve states this Initiative serves as a way to thank soldiers for their selfless service and dedication, which is parallel with the EHRA's commitment to give back to our community's service men and women.

Our relationship with the Indiana National Guard resulted from the ESGR sharing the success of their relationship with EHRA. As a result of this referral, the Indiana National Guard and EHRA are utilizing the "seamless transition" program as a model for the career counseling services being offered to members of the Indiana National Guard. The EHRA has been asked to conduct a "Seamless Transition" workshop to teach soldiers how to prepare a resume and to overview the Do's and Don'ts of applying for positions. As this program continues to grow, we will branch out into interviewing techniques, applying online and other workshops to meet the service members' needs.

The Indiana Guard has also created a job database giving employers access to post positions. This allows soldiers to search job openings and then contact the Indiana Guard to express interest. If the job candidate needs assistance with his or her resume, the Indiana Guard will contact a local HR professional who has volunteered his or her services. Once the job candidate's resume is prepared, the service member will apply for the position. These tools make it possible for employers to match their employment opportunities with the unemployed skilled and dedicated soldiers in their area.

4. What were the program's goals? Were they met?

EHRA achieved the objectives of this workforce readiness initiative. By developing successful partnerships with the ESGR, Army's Employer Partnership Initiative and the Indiana National Guard the EHRA has been able to provide career counseling services including transferable skill identification, resume preparation, mock interviews and ongoing career mentoring to military personnel transitioning to civilian employment. EHRA also connects local employers to military personnel seeking civilian employment by promoting the use of the Army's Employer Partnership Initiative and Indiana National Guard's job posting websites.

In addition, EHRA has been able to demonstrate the support of local employers through State of Support signing ceremonies, as well as, educate local employers on USERRA and provide networking opportunities.

5. Was the program effective? Based upon what measureable criteria?

In 2009, EHRA provided career counseling services; assisting 500 immobilized military personnel in identifying transferable skills, developing resumes, interview preparation and provided on-going career mentoring. EHRA member employers accessed thousands of soldiers on the Army's Employer Partnership Initiative and the Indiana Guard's job posting websites. EHRA coordinated and encouraged local employers to sign a Statement of Support for the ESGA. To date, these efforts have resulted in more than 100 local employers signing a Statement of Support agreeing to recognize, honor and enforce USERRA; ensuring their managers and supervisors have the tools they need to effectively manage employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve; and agreeing to continually recognize and support our country's service members and their families in peace, in crisis and in war. EHRA educated and provided networking opportunity to 70 ESGR members, local employers and their service members at a golf scramble. Through these partnerships EHRA member employers have been able to influence the military to provide training and certifications that will better prepare military personnel for a successful transition to civilian employment.

6. Who benefited from your program? How so?

The “Seamless Transition” program benefits the military, employers, HR professional and most importantly soldiers.

The military benefits by being able to attract and retain service members. This is accomplished by offering training /certifications that are in demand by local employers, as well as, facilitating a smooth transition to civilian employment.

Employers benefit by easily accessing these highly skilled and dedicated prospective employees. In addition, the employer’s ability to influence the military to provide required training / certifications will also reduce future training costs. Employers also benefit through education that ensures understanding of USERRA requirements.

HR professionals benefit by providing career counseling service to military personnel to facilitate a smooth transition to civilian employment. HR professionals also benefit from the opportunity to give back to those who have selflessly served our country.

Soldiers benefit from assistance identifying transferable skill, resume preparation and interview preparation, as well as, on going career counseling. This allows for a smooth transition from military to civilian employment which helps stabilize the life of the soldier and their family.

The military believes these efforts encourage individual to serve our country, which ultimately protects us all.

#### 7. What makes your program deserving of a Pinnacle Award?

The ESGR and Army’s Employer Partnership Initiative describe their partnership with EHRA on the “Seamless Transition” program as the model to be adopted in other states because they could not provide a full range of employment services without support from local HR professionals.

Our relationship with the Indiana National Guard resulted from the ESGR sharing the success of their relationship with EHRA. As a result of this referral, the Indiana National Guard and EHRA are utilizing the “seamless transition” program as a model for the career counseling services being offered to members of the Indiana National Guard.

The “Seamless Transition” program has been successfully implemented in Evansville, IN by the EHRA; however, the ESGR, Army and Indiana Guard representatives work in a state-wide or regional capacity. Therefore, the EHRA has provided information on the “Seamless Transition” program to other SHRM Affiliate Workforce Readiness Directors throughout the State of Indiana.

Our hope is that partnerships between military organizations and SHRM affiliate chapters will expand. Acknowledging this program with a Pinnacle Award will demonstrate SHRM’s commitment to supporting the military personnel who selflessly serve our country.

### **Section 4 – Standards of Excellence**

#### #4 – Outstanding leadership and coordination of extremely effective activities.

EHRA has been extremely effective in establishing partnerships with the ESGR, the Army’s Employer Partnership Initiative and the Indiana National Guard. These partnerships have enabled EHRA to demonstrate outstanding leadership in our community by providing career counseling services to military personnel transitioning to civilian employment. EHRA’s career counseling initiatives have proven invaluable to military personnel, many of whom have never prepared a resume or interviewed for civilian employment. Participating in the “Seamless Transition” program has also proven to be extremely rewarding for HR professional; creating an opportunity to give back to those who have selflessly served our country.

Our partners consider the “Seamless Transition” program the model that should be adopted in other states because they could not provide a full range of employment services without support from local HR professionals. EHRA’s community leadership is also evidenced by the 100+ local employers who have signed a Statement of Support agreeing to recognize, honor and enforce USERRA; ensuring their managers and supervisors have the tools they need to effectively manage employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve; and agreeing to continually recognize and support our country’s service members and their families in peace, in crisis and in war.