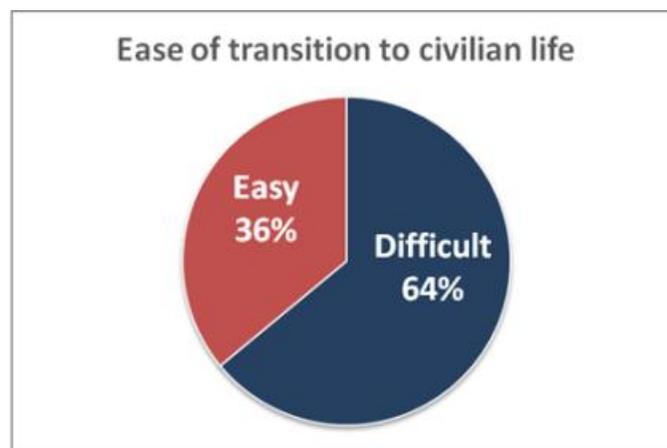


# Supporting Florida's Veterans



## Background

Many Veterans face unique challenges while transitioning from military life back into civilian society. These challenges include re-establishing family roles, the loss of identity as a service member, entering the civilian workforce, enrolling into college, returning to a job, and adjusting to their responsibilities as a civilian. Additionally, service-related health issues can further complicate the transition process. If left untreated, posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries can lead to substance abuse, behavioral health problems, and homelessness. United Way's MISSION UNITED supports numerous efforts to assist the Sunshine State's 1.5 million veterans.

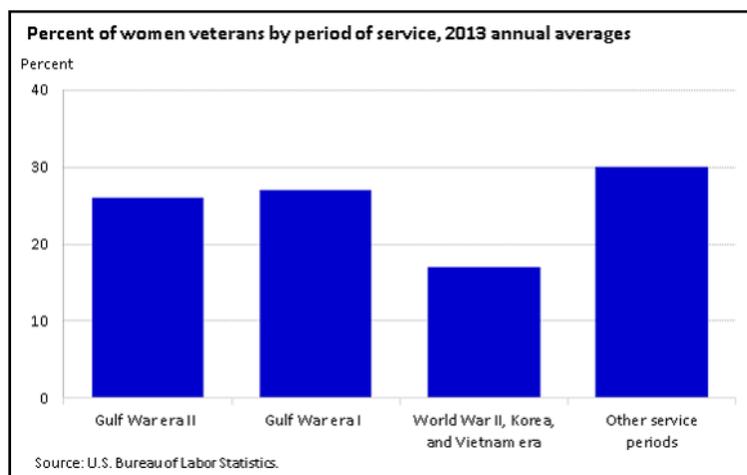


## Education

There is not an effective system for Veterans to transfer their military experience to college credit throughout Florida, leading many Veterans to repeat courses that they completed in the military and spend additional time in school before entering the workforce. This puts them at a disadvantage to their contemporaries who did not serve. In addition, the taxpayers are responsible to pay for earned credits that have already been paid for.

## Women Veterans

Women Veterans are less likely to reach out to VA for support after experiencing PTSD or Mental Illness due to the fear of triggering symptoms. Creating a pathway for these women (and men) to access community-based services would lower barriers to access crucial services that have long-term effects.



## Peer Support Network

Veterans throughout the U.S. face mental health and substance abuse issues. According to a 2008 study, between 5 and 15 percent of veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan returned with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and an additional 2 to 14 percent returned with major depression. PTSD attributed to combat has affected between 2 and 17 percent of all U.S. military veterans since the Vietnam War. By plugging into a centralized network in Florida that can respond and assist veterans in all 67 counties, a lifeline to connect individuals to much needed behavioral health services and peers will be available.

## PROPOSED CHANGES:

- **SUPPORT** HB 217 and SB 442 language in the Military and Veterans Active Duty charter to standardize transfer of college credits.
- **ACCESS** Federal VA dollars to fund specialized clinics that focus on Military Sexual Trauma and expand access to community based health and mental health services.
- **SUPPORT** HB 365 and SB 1222 to create a centralized referral and peer support network through 211.