

The Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration and the Expiration of Term of Service Sponsorship Program

# Supporting healthy and successful transitions back to civilian communities



## Partnership Overview

A partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Expiration Term of Service Sponsorship Program (ETS-SP) aims to support Service members and Veterans across social determinants of health (SDOH) as they integrate back into civilian communities.

[SDOH](#) are the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. Facilitating access to positive SDOH is critical for transitioning Service members, whose [suicide risk is three times higher](#) immediately after separating from the military than during active duty. The partnership between VHA and ETS-SP aims to provide individualized support for all Service members before, during, and after their transition out of military service. ETS-SP pairs Service members and Veterans with local peer sponsors in the communities they will be living in. Sponsors provide one-on-one support throughout the transition process, have received training from VHA about VA benefits, and are knowledgeable about local and regional community resources. ETS-SP and VHA also collaborate to make the VHA enrollment process easier and faster for Service members who have signed up with ETS-SP by facilitating VHA registration pre-transition. The benefits of this personalized and proactive partnership are free for Service members and Veterans. Together, VHA and ET-SP are helping the Veteran community access the positive SDOH associated with mental health resiliency and positive health outcomes.



## Promoting Healthy Transitions Home

- Each year, approximately [200,000 Service members](#) leave the military and transition to civilian communities.
- [Some research](#) indicates that between 44% and 72% of Service members feel high levels of stress while transitioning out of the DoD.
- VA's [national strategy for preventing Veteran suicide](#) leverages communities within which Veterans typically live. These can be Veterans' families, neighborhoods, health care systems, workplaces, schools, faith-based or other social groups. Together, systems ensure all Veterans both inside and outside the VA system are reached.
- [Early research](#) also indicates that when Veterans engage in VHA care with community-based interventions and sponsorship programs, they have easier transitions to civilian life, achieve better SDOH, and have reduced suicide risk factors.

## VHA Partnership Roles and Resources

- VA regional coordinators, community partners, and sponsors help Service members and Veterans identify unaddressed needs, and resources to address those needs, pre-separation from the military. These resources include VHA Nutrition and Food Services, which provides [meal planning tips](#), nutrition information from registered [dietitians](#), and help for [food insecurity](#), among other resources. VA can also help with [home loans](#), [disability housing grants](#), [homelessness services](#), [career counseling](#), support for small businesses, [education benefits](#), and more.



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
National Center for Healthcare  
Advancement and Partnerships



Veterans Health Administration National Center for Health Advancement and Partnerships



## VHA Partnership Roles and Resources *(Continued)*

- Together, VHA and ETS-SP collaborate to help Service members and recently separated Veterans access VHA health benefits and services in the communities to which they are moving. VHA and ETS-SP also help transitioning Service members register for VHA benefits pre-separation from the military.
- Regional VA coordinators across the VHA network help Veterans, Service members, their families, and caregivers navigate the VHA health benefits enrollment process and coordinate with [community partners](#) to help Veterans and Service members reach VA, federal, and community resources that support a successful transition to civilian life.
- VA staff provide free training for volunteer sponsors to better assist the Service members and Veterans with whom they are paired.
- VHA is the largest integrated health care system and serves 9 million Veterans yearly. VA also offers [Veteran health care](#) for a wide range of services, including [LGBTQ+ affirming care](#). Additional training from VA staff is available for sponsors paired with LGBTQ+ Veterans, women Veterans, and other Veteran underserved and underrepresented communities.

## ETS-SP Partnership Role and Resources:

- Service members and recently separated Veterans can enroll with ETS-SP before they separate from the military or within the first 12 months post-separation.
- ETS-SP pairs Veterans and Service members prior to their separation from the military with trained volunteer peers.
- ETS-SP provides Service members and recently separated Veterans with a dashboard of national and local resources, including VA resources in their local communities.
- ETS-SP manages volunteer sponsors together with community partners so that sponsors can better assist

the Service members and Veterans with ongoing, group-based learning and training for volunteer sponsors.

- ETS-SP shares resources for transitioning Service members and Veterans on digital dashboards and on the ETS-SP online [digital library](#).

## WHAT IS THE VSPN INITIATIVE?

VHA's National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships (HAP) leads the [Veteran Sponsor Partnership Network](#) (VSPN) initiative to facilitate the development of non-monetary partnerships between VHA's Veteran Integrated Services Networks and local and national community partners. Community partners aligned with the VSPN initiative manage [volunteer sponsors](#) who are paired with [Veterans and Service members](#) transitioning out of the military, and educate Veterans and Service members about local, regional, and national resources that can help them successfully reintegrate into civilian communities. ETS-SP is one of more than a dozen community partners aligned with the VSPN initiative.

For more information about the VSPN, please visit: [va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/VSPN.asp](https://va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/VSPN.asp).

## Innovative Strategic Partnerships Facilitated through HAP

HAP's mission is to serve as a trusted resource and a catalyst for the growth of effective partnerships at the national, state, and community level. HAP advances the health and well-being of Veterans through exploration of innovative, safe, and ethical emerging therapies.

To learn more about VHA partnerships, please visit: [va.gov/healthpartnerships](https://va.gov/healthpartnerships).



## ENROLL FOR YOUR VA HEALTH BENEFITS NOW!

Through the VSPN and partnerships, Service members are getting an earlier start to enrollment than ever before. Service members can start by registering for VA health care before they transition out of military service, which will promote continuity of services and benefits. Visit [va.gov](https://va.gov) to start the enrollment process.

Sponsors are not managed by VA, individuals who wish to become a sponsor do so by signing up as a volunteer with a non-VA organization. VA does not endorse and is not responsible for sponsors or organizations that manage sponsors.

This partnership is not an exclusive arrangement or endorsement of services provided by the Expiration of Term of Service Sponsorship Program. VA does not endorse any individual organization, ETS-SP, or licensing of the ETS-SP platform. The ETS-SP platform is not a VA domain, signing up for ETS-SP does not enroll Service members or Veterans in VA benefits or VHA healthcare. The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Veterans Affairs of the linked web sites, or the information, products or services contained therein.