Support for Military Students with a Disability

Jane Ellingwood, Karen Zielinski, & Richard Rodriguez

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Prescott AZ & Worldwide
Part 1: Statistical Data & Diagnosis

Karen Zielinski
Disability Support & Student Services Coordinator
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Worldwide & Online
DEPLOYMENT
Various Disabilities

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

mTBI

Cognitive Thinking - Front of Brain
• Feeling "in a Fog", Attention issue, Can't find words

Physical - Top of Brain
• Headache, Blurred Vision, Tinnitus

Sleep - Back of the Brain
• Excessive Sleep and Altered Sleep Patterns

Behavioral/Emotional - Bottom of the Brain
• Depression, Anxiety, Irritability, Impulsivity

MORAL INJURY
Suicidal Ideation

- The 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention annual Report provided by the U.S. Department for Veterans (2019) outlines Veterans represent 18% of all suicide deaths in the United States, even though they only make-up 8.5% of the population.

- 20 Veterans everyday take their own lives
Veterans Administration

a. Defines disability compensation
b. Medical examination
c. Rating is determined
   - correlates injury/illness to a % rating that estimates the reduction in average earnings capacity caused by the disability
d. Assigned VA Chapter Codes
   - Montgomery GI Bill - Chapter 30  
   - Vocational Rehabilitation - Chapter 31  
   - Post 9-11 or Forever GI Bill - Chapter 33  
   - Survivors' & Dependents Educational Assistance – Chapter 35 (not a veteran)
ERAU-Worldwide Accommodations

Modules in nine weeks

• Course breakdown is posted three days before the course begins.

• Assignments due dates are posted, and students have 1 week to complete each module.

• Student can go at own pace and each module assignments must be handed in on due date.

  More time exams/quizzes: Double time

  More time assignments: One-Three days

  Disability related class absence: Not to exceed two days
**Best Practices Summary**

**New Student meeting:**
Listen/Empathy (Keep in mind it is rare to have one disability—all may not be explained)
Review Self-Report, and Policy/Procedures with student
Ask what will help (How much more time tests? How many more day's assignments? Other?)

**Understand VA Coding**

**Know Resources:**
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, access and manage VA benefits and healthcare
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, tutor assistance
Military One Source, non-medical counseling and free trainings/support
Psych Armor, clinical support center and free trainings/support Veterans and families
Part 2 : Literature Review

Jane Ellingwood
Disability Support Services Director
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Prescott Campus
Literature Review: Personal Identity

• College students have multiple facets to their identities
• Disabled students arriving at college: 1 of 2 identities
  1. Disability identity integrated from birth
  2. Personal identity developed prior to acquiring disability
• Military students with a service-acquired disability experience the second type
Literature Review: Military Service

- The military has high minimum standards for determining a disability acquired during service
- May inadvertently stigmatize disability culture
- Disabled students go through stages of understanding and acceptance of their disability
- Military students
  - Struggle adapting to a disability identity as an adult
  - May receive very little documentation or support from the VA regarding their disability
Literature Review: Rights & Responsibilities

• To be successful, student veterans need to understand
  • how their disability can alter their classroom engagement,
  • what their rights and responsibilities are under the ADA, and
  • how to obtain accommodations on campus

• They may also hesitate to seek services until they face barriers in the classroom
Recommendations: Addressing Stigmatization

• Be aware that when a veteran or military student comes to you, they may be in your office reluctantly
• They may need extra time to discuss their concerns about receiving accommodations
• They may be watching you for cues about how they should view disability
Recommendations: Ensuring Equal Access

• Recognize and support their efforts to accept their disability
• Understand that acceptance may be difficult
• Teach them about the role of the ADA in their lives
Recommendations: Campus Veterans' Services

• Find out who your campus veterans’ services specialist is
• Make sure their staff knows what your office does and when they should refer military students
• Consult with them and seek guidance on engaging with military students
• Ask military students you meet with if they have connected with veterans' services on campus
Part 3 : Review of Veteran Services

Richard Rodriguez
Veteran Services Coordinator and ERAU Alumni
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Prescott Campus
Service-Connected Disability Ratings

• 190 to 90 Days - A Pre-Discharge Claim

• Less than 90 days – No claims allowed until fully discharged

• From 90 days pre-discharge until 1 year post-discharged any new claims are still considered service connected.

• This starts a lengthy process of many medical evaluation's
Unrated Veterans

• If Veteran has not filed – Contact a Veterans Benefits Advisor

• Certified Veterans Service Officer (VSO), (American Legion, Dept. Of Vet. Services)

• They understand and can navigate the VA system.

• DD-214 = Discharge Papers and Copy of Medical Record

• Claim process on average takes 9 months for results
Documentation Provided by the VA

*Please follow the handout "VA Disability Ratings Letter" while I discuss key points.*
How to Access Documentation

• [https://www.va.gov/](https://www.va.gov/)

• Options on signing into “My HealtheVet”

• Download or print your rating

• Options on navigating and requesting other information
Personal Pride

• Vets are extremely proud of their service to this country

• Pride may stop them from requesting services

• Reluctant to come forward and ask for help

• My own experience as a student at Embry-Riddle
Summary & Conclusion

Jane Ellingwood
Disability Support Services Director
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Prescott Campus
Key Points

• Military and veteran students often have complex, overlapping disabilities.
• They need to be supported through their journey of acceptance
  • of their disability
  • of coming to you for services
• Documentation from the VA can be sparse, so accept what you can get.
• The VA clinician is not going to recommend accommodations.
References 1


References 2


References 3


References 4


References 5


