ADVANCE is an HR&A initiative to invest in people development, workforce engagement and talent management for the delivery of high-quality healthcare, benefits and other services to Veterans and their families.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Military Cultural Awareness Training

Print Version

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is engaged in providing employees across all administrations with a better understanding of military culture. This information is critical to supporting VA employees as they serve the needs of veterans and their families. This training will help VA improve customer service and achieve mission success.

The Military Cultural Awareness Training Course, developed as an online e-learning course, is available on VA’s Talent Management System (TMS). A VALU TMS login is required.

Type the following address into your browser: www.tms.va.gov
Search for course: NFED 1341520

This print version of the course was created to ensure all VA employees have access to this training program. All of the course content is included within this booklet with the exception of the content from the videos. A CD that includes the videos is located inside the back cover. These videos can be played from most PCs that have a video player installed. Internet service is not required.

In addition, a pre-test and post-test are included to replicate the online course. If you wish to assess your knowledge of military culture before and after reading through this course, answer sheets and answer keys are included in this booklet. Scores are not recorded.

For more information about the topics included in this course, a list of resources is available at:
vaww.va.gov/valu/mca.asp
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Introduction to Military Cultural Awareness

Military Cultural Awareness

Welcome to the Military Cultural Awareness course. The goal of this course is to increase your knowledge and awareness of military culture in order that you can better serve Veterans and their families.

The Military Cultural Awareness Course was developed and is available on VA’s Learning Management System, VALU. This print version was created to ensure all VA employees have access to this training program. All of the course content is included in written format within this booklet, with the exception of the content from the videos. A CD that includes the videos is located inside the back cover. These videos can be played from most PCs that have a video player installed. Internet service is not required.

Locate the CD in the back of this manual and view the video titled ADVANCE.
Lesson 1 – Introduction
Sarah’s First Day at VA

ANNA – So, Sarah, are you excited about starting your new job?

SARAH – Very. But a little nervous. My grandfather was in the Korean War, and of course we studied the wars in school, but I don’t feel like I know much about the Veterans.

ANNA – I didn’t either when I started.

SARAH – It seems like a whole different world if you have never actually been in the military.

ANNA – I agree. But the good news is that there are a lot of Veterans who actually work at VA – they are really committed to making things better for other Veterans – I’m sure they can help you get up-to-speed.

Lesson 1 – Introduction
Getting Started

JIM – Welcome to VA, Sarah. We have a busy day planned for you.

JIM – As you know, here at VA, our mission is to fulfill President Lincoln’s promise: To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan by serving and honoring the men and women who are America’s Veterans.

JIM – To meet our mission, we think it’s very important that everyone who works at VA understands the military culture so that we can better serve Veterans.

SARAH – It certainly seems like a different way of life than what I’m used to.

JIM – That’s very true. And by better understanding the military culture, we are able to better serve Veterans, whether in person or indirectly.
JIM – What do you know about the Military?

SARAH – Just a bit about it from school and friends who are in the Reserves.

JIM – Well then, first let’s see what you do know and then we’ll fill in the blanks.

Pre-Test

At this time, take the Military Cultural Awareness Pre-Test located on the next page. Record your answers to these questions on a separate sheet so that this book may be reused. (Answer sheets can be found in the back of this book, or answers can be recorded on any sheet of paper.) The purpose of this pre-test is to assess your current awareness and knowledge of the military. Refer to the “Pre-Test Answer Key” in the back of this book to check your answers.
Military Cultural Awareness Pre-Test

Answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge, writing your answer on the answer sheet provided in the back of this book.

**DO NOT WRITE YOUR RESPONSES IN THIS BOOK**

1. VA benefits and services are extended to Veterans and Servicemembers who have served in this branch of the military.
   a. What is the U.S. Marine Corps?
   b. What is the U.S. Navy?
   c. What is only the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Marines?
   d. What is all branches of the military?

2. This military service is responsible for all land-based military operations.
   a. What is the U.S. Army?
   b. What is the U.S. Navy?
   c. What is the U.S. Air Force?
   d. What is the U.S. Marine Corps?
   e. What is the U.S. Coast Guard?

3. Under the command of the President, this military service acts with the U.S. Navy during a time of war.
   a. What is the U.S. Army?
   b. What is the U.S. Navy?
   c. What is the U.S. Air Force?
   d. What is the U.S. Marine Corps?
   e. What is the U.S. Coast Guard?

4. The phrase, *Semper Fidelis* has been the long-time motto for this branch of the military.
   a. What is the U.S. Army?
   b. What is the U.S. Navy?
   c. What is the U.S. Air Force?
   d. What is the U.S. Marine Corps?
   e. What is the U.S. Coast Guard?

5. Reserve units are found in each of these military branches.
   a. What are the U.S. Army and U.S. Marines?
   b. What are the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard?
   c. What are the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Marines?
   d. What are all four U.S. branches of the military; Navy, Army, Marines, and Air Force?

6. This made the U.S. military an All-volunteer organization.
   a. What is ending the draft?
   b. What is making the draft optional?
   c. What is an increase in military recruiting efforts?
   d. What is expanding the Reserves?
7. Currently, this branch of the military has the largest number of enlisted Servicemembers.
   a. What is The Marines?
   b. What is The Navy?
   c. What is The Army?
   d. What is The Air Force?

8. This generally lasts 7-12 weeks, depending on the specific requirements for each military service.
   a. What is initial training?
   b. What is the enlistment process?
   c. What is spring training?
   d. What is Warrant Officer training?

9. This is normally the biggest advocate for Servicemembers.
   a. What is VA?
   b. What is the family?
   c. What is their fellow Servicemembers?
   d. What is the church?

10. This program helps Servicemembers and their families connect with local resources before, during, and after deployments.
    a. What is Welcoming Warriors?
    b. What is TBI?
    c. What is PTSD?
    d. What is the Yellow Ribbon Program?

11. This military conflict had the largest number of Servicemembers.
    a. What is World War II?
    b. What is the Vietnam War?
    c. What is the Korean Conflict?
    d. What is the Gulf War?

12. This conflict was the longest lasting conflict since WWII ended.
    a. What is Operation Desert Storm?
    b. What is the Vietnam War?
    c. What is World War II?
    d. What is the Korean Conflict?

13. This military conflict is often referred to as the “forgotten war.”
    a. What is the Gulf War?
    b. What is the Korean War?
    c. What is Operation Desert Storm?
    d. What is the War on Terror?
14. More than 63,000 U.S. troops and 45,000 National Guardsmen participated in relief efforts after this natural disaster.
   a. What is Hurricane Hugo?
   b. What is Hurricane Katrina?
   c. What is Hurricane Ivan?
   d. What is Hurricane Emilio?

15. The response of these attacks led to the War on Terror.
   a. What are the attacks of 9/11?
   b. What is the attack on Pearl Harbor?
   c. What is the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait?
   d. What is the attack on Nagasaki?

16. When greeting Veterans at VA, this is a good rule of thumb to use.
   a. What is do not address them unless you know their rank?
   b. What is address them based on how they introduce themselves?
   c. What is address Commissioned Officers by rank?
   d. What is address all Veterans by their rank?

17. These particular ranks refer to those who entered the military with no formal officer training.
   a. What are Enlisted Ranks?
   b. What are Warrant Officers?
   c. What are Commissioned Officers?
   d. What are Officers?

18. Generally, the rank of a Servicemember can be found on these areas of the uniform.
   a. What is the collar?
   b. What is the breast of the shirt?
   c. What are shoulders, lapels, and sleeves?
   d. What is the hat?

19. When flags are passing by in review, it is expected that all VA employees do this.
   a. What is continue to work?
   b. What is salute?
   c. What is no action is needed?
   d. What is stand?

20. This is the name that Servicemembers in the Coast Guard use to refer to themselves.
   a. What is Coastguards?
   b. What is Guardians?
   c. What is Sailors?
   d. What is Protectors?

21. This section of the training will be helpful in understanding the core values of the Veterans.
   a. What is Branches of the Military?
   b. What is Servicemembers and Veterans?
   c. What is Military Conflicts and Disaster Support?
   d. What is Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs?
22. This section of the training offers a glimpse of what Servicemembers go through when deployed.
   a. What are the Branches of the Military?
   b. What are Servicemembers and Veterans?
   c. What is Military Conflicts and Disaster Support?
   d. What is Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs?

23. This section of the training offers information on the number of women who served in each of the wars since WWII.
   a. What are the Branches of the Military?
   b. What are Servicemembers and Veterans?
   c. What is Military Conflicts and Disaster Support?
   d. What is Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs?

24. This section of the training explains the difference between Enlisted Personnel and Warrant Officers.
   a. What are the Branches of the Military?
   b. What are Servicemembers and Veterans?
   c. What is Military Conflicts and Disaster Support?
   d. What is Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs?

25. This is the purpose of this training course on Military Cultural Awareness.
   a. What is increasing VA employees' awareness of what Servicemembers and Veterans go through in the service of our country?
   b. What is learning how to communicate with Veterans?
   c. What is learning common effects from combat for Servicemembers and Veterans?
   d. What is understanding how to recognize uniforms and ranks of the various branches of the military?
Lesson 1 – Introduction

Pre-Test Results

JIM – So, how did you do?

SARAH – It looks like I might still have a bit to learn.

JIM – We’ve got a schedule all set for you. Let’s look at what we’re going to do today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Meet with Jim</td>
<td>Discuss importance of understanding the Military Culture as it relates to working at VA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Branches of the Military</td>
<td>Identify various branches of military service and describe their core values and differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Servicemembers and Veterans</td>
<td>Describe aspects of the military experience including training received, experiencing combat, the impact of military service on family members, and adjusting to the return home to civilian life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Military Conflicts and Disaster Support</td>
<td>Identify the major military conflicts from WWII through the OEF/OIF era. Describe the role of the military in times of disaster response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs</td>
<td>Identify the common uniforms, markings and how these relate to military rank and titles. Describe proper way to greet Veterans and Servicemembers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>VA Practices and Courtesies</td>
<td>Identify how knowledge of military experience and culture will help VA employees to better serve Veterans and Servicemembers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>Wrap up with Jim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 2 – Branches of the Military
Introduction and Objectives

Branches of the Military

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to identify the various branches of military service and describe their core values and differences in order to serve VA clients with the dignity, honor, respect, and compassion that they deserve.
Lesson 2 – Branches of the Military
Military Branches and VA

SARAH – How many Veterans would you say VA has served?

JIM – VA has served over 8 million Veterans, with some benefits extended to Servicemembers, too.

SARAH – Does that number include just the main branches?

JIM – Actually, it includes the Reserve component as well. So the Air and Army National Guard, as well as the Reserves are included.

JIM – I have some information for you to read that will provide more detail.

Lesson 2 – Branches of the Military
The Main Branches of the Military

JIM – Read through these brochures. It will help you understand the basics of each area of military service.
The United States Air Force

- The mission of the United States Air Force is to fly, fight, and win...in air, space, and cyberspace.
- The Air Force is responsible for conducting military operations in the air and space.
- The Air Force acts in the defense of the Nation by deploying aircraft to fight enemy aircraft, bombing enemy targets, providing reconnaissance, and transporting other armed services.
- The Air Force began as the Army Air Forces during World War II, becoming an independent branch of the military and full partner with the Army and Navy in 1947.
- All members of the Air Force, regardless of title or rank, follow three core values:
  - Integrity first
  - Service before self
  - Excellence in all we do
- These core values represent the glue that unifies the Air Force and ties each one of them to those who served in the past.

The United States Army

- The primary mission of the United States Army is to fight and win wars by providing land dominance promptly, and whenever necessary.
- The Army is the branch of the U.S. Armed Forces responsible for land-based military operations.
- It is the largest branch of the U.S. military.
- It is the oldest established branch of the U.S. military.
- There are seven core values, which spell out the acronym LDRSHIP:
  - Loyalty
  - Duty
  - Respect
  - Selfless Service
  - Honor
  - Integrity
  - Personal Courage
- All members of the U.S. Army are termed “soldiers.”
- The Army motto is “This We Will Defend.”
The United States Coast Guard
- The United States Coast Guard resides under the Department of Homeland Security but is considered part of the military service.
- The Coast Guard operates with the U.S. Navy upon the declaration of war or under the President’s direction.
- The Coast Guard serves to safeguard our Nation’s maritime interests in the heartland, in the ports, at sea, and around the globe.
- Members are known as “guardians” who protect the maritime economy and the environment, defend our maritime borders, and save those in peril.
- Guardians follow three distinct core values:
  - Honor - integrity is our standard
  - Respect - we value our diverse workforce
  - Devotion to duty - we are professionals, military and civilian, who seek responsibility, accept accountability, and are committed to the successful achievement of our organizational goals.
- The Coast Guard’s history has forged their character and purpose as America’s Maritime Guardian — “Always Ready” for all hazards and all threats.

The United States Marine Corps
- The mission of all United States Marines is to “at any time, be liable to do duty in the forts and garrisons of the United States, on the seacoast, or any other duty on shore, as the President, at his discretion, shall direct.”
- The U.S. Marine Corps serves as an all-purpose, fast-response task force, capable of quick action in areas requiring emergency intervention.
- The Marines were the first American combat troops deployed to Vietnam and the last to leave during the evacuation of the American embassy in Saigon.
- The Marines believe that there is no such thing as a former Marine; rather they say “Once a Marine, always a Marine.”
- The Marines follow these three core values:
  - Honor
  - Courage
  - Commitment
- Semper Fidelis, Latin for “Always Faithful” became the Marine Corps motto in 1883. It guides Marines to remain faithful to the mission at hand and to the Corps and country.
The United States Navy

- The mission of the United States Navy is to train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom of the seas.

- The Navy adheres to three simple core values:
  - Honor
  - Courage
  - Commitment

- From Navy ships to aircraft, specialty vessels and weapons, Navy sailors work with some of the most powerful machines ever put to sea.

- They specialize in crisis response, special operations, evacuations and humanitarian operations. All in order to protect and defend America and make the world a safer place.

Lesson 2 – Branches of the Military

Reserves and National Guard

SARAH – OK. I think I've got the general idea of the main branches of military service, but where do the Reserves come into play?

JIM – Good question. Here’s a little more reading material to help you understand how the Reserves and Air and Army National Guard operate, as those Servicemembers may also be eligible for our benefits and assistance.
The United Military Reserves

- Each branch of the military includes Reserve units.
- There are Servicemembers who are no longer members of the active duty component, but choose to serve in the Reserves. These reservists may be eligible to receive VA benefits.
- Some reservists directly join the Reserves, with some choosing to become active duty Servicemembers.
- In general, reservists will spend one weekend a month in training and attend a two-week training exercise once a year.
- In times of war, reservists are frequently called up to active duty. When a reservist is activated, he or she would then be considered an active duty Servicemember.
- Reservists can be called up to support efforts abroad or to backfill positions stateside that have been left vacant by deployed, active duty personnel.

The United Air and National Guard

- The National Guard is made up of the Air National Guard and the Army National Guard, serving both state and Federal governments.
- Guard units are combat-trained and can be deployed overseas as well as in their home communities.
- Training is normally conducted one weekend per month, and one two-week period each year.
- Guardsmen and women are sometimes called the “citizen soldier.”
- The National Guard is under the command of the governor of the state in which the member serves.
- Upon agreement with the governor, guard units can be deployed to other states or other nations in support of emergency or war fighting efforts.
- Since 2001, roughly 47% of both Air and Army National Guard troops have been deployed to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan.
Lesson 2 – Branches of the Military

Knowledge Check

SARAH – OK. I think I understand the differences now.

JIM – Good. Let’s just do a quick check to see how well you remember.

✓ Select the correct answers to the questions below. Use the Knowledge Check Answer Key in the back of this book to check your answers.

Which branch of the military’s core values make the acronym LDRSHIP?

A. U.S. Marines
B. U.S. Air Force
C. U.S. Navy
D. U.S. Army

True or false, only the U.S. Marines and the U.S. Army have Reserve units.

A. True
B. False
Lesson 2 – Branches of the Military
Lesson Summary

JIM – So, are you an expert on the branches of the military now?

SARAH – Not quite an expert, but I took a few notes.

JIM – Let’s review your notes and make sure we’ve covered the most important points before we move on.

Branches of the Military

- Military service includes Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard, plus the Reserves and the Air and Army National Guard.
  - Army – Responsible for land-based military operations.
    Largest branch of military.
    Motto – “This We Will Defend”
  - Navy – A seagoing force to defend our seas and protect our shores.
  - Air Force – Conducts military operations in air, space, and cyberspace.
    Motto – “Fly, fight, and win!”
  - Marines – No such thing as a former Marine. Motto – “First to Fight,” Semper Fidelis, Latin for “Always Faithful” – guides Marines to remain faithful to mission, corps and country.
  - Coast Guard – Falls under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) but operates with the Navy during times of war. Created to safeguard our maritime interests.
    Motto – “Always Ready”

- Reserves – Each branch of the military has Reserve units who can be called into active duty in times of war.

- National Guard – There is the Air National Guard and the Army National Guard. These are state-based branches of the military serving both state and Federal governments. They can be deployed to other states or nations in times of emergency or war fighting efforts.
Lesson 3 – Servicemembers and Veterans

Objectives

Servicemembers and Veterans

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to describe aspects of the military experience including training received, experiencing combat, the impact of military service on family members, and adjusting to the return home and to civilian life.
Lesson 3 – Servicemembers and Veterans

Introduction

SARAH – I imagine that being on active duty is a big transition for these Servicemembers.

JIM – Yes it is. And it not only affects the Servicemember, but their families and loved ones as well.

JIM – Servicemembers join for different reasons. And everyone has their own experience. Some find the experience challenging and feel energized, committed, and strengthened by it. Other’s find that the accumulation of stressors at different times can take a toll on their physical and mental health.

The most challenging stressors seem to be loss, exposure to trauma, situations that create inner conflict, and overall wear and tear. Even those who are not deployed to combat zones can experience one or all of these stressors, as a need for commitment, high responsibility, frequent changes, and long hours are experienced whether deployed or not.

JIM – As for the family; frequent moves, absence of the military parent, and other stresses are common for military families. However, the deployment of a parent to a combat zone represents a challenge of a different magnitude.

SARAH – My respect is really growing for these Servicemembers and their families.

JIM – And that’s where VA comes in Sarah. We help them make use of the entitlements and benefits they need and deserve.

JIM – We have collected some videos about some of the individual experiences. Would you like to watch them?

SARAH – Yes. I think it will be helpful.

Lesson 3 – Servicemembers and Veterans

Military Video Selection

Locate the CD in the back of this manual and view the videos titled, Why They Joined, Training Received, Combat Experience, Returning Home, and Impact on Families that illustrate the experiences Veterans have encountered while serving in the military.
Lesson 3 – Servicemembers and Veterans

VA Benefits

JIM – Sarah, how is it going?

SARAH – Well, the mission of VA is much clearer now.

JIM – How so?

SARAH – The videos made it more clear what the Veterans go through to serve our Nation. Now I understand some of the programs that VA offers, like the GI Bill and health benefits.

JIM – That’s right, Sarah. Each Veteran has different needs, and the overall needs of the Veteran population are continually changing. As a department, we have to constantly assess and improve the services we offer to ensure that they are meeting the Veteran’s needs, such as healthcare, burial, and other benefits.

Lesson 3 – Servicemembers and Veterans

Knowledge Check

JIM – Let’s just do a quick check to see how well you remember.

Select the correct answer to the question below. Use the Knowledge Check Answer Key in the back of this book to check your answers.

Which of the following statements is false?

A. Initial training ranges from 8-12 weeks among the military branches.

B. Reintegrating into family and community after deployment is very challenging.

C. Deployments are stressful on families, including children.

D. A high rate of separation and divorce exists in the Veteran population.
Lesson 3 – Servicemembers and Veterans

Lesson Summary

JIM – So, what did you think of those videos?

SARAH – My respect is really growing for the Servicemembers and Veterans, Jim.

JIM – I’d be interested in some of the take-aways you have noted. Do you mind sharing your notes with me?

Servicemembers and Veterans

- People join the military for a wide range of reasons.
- Each branch of the military has their own version of initial training:
  - Training lasts 7-12 weeks based on individual military branches.
- Commitment, responsibility, and long hours are required by service members whether deployed or not.
- Combat experience is intense and can affect Servicemembers differently.
- One of the biggest challenges for Servicemembers is reintegrating after deployment.
  - Long deployments from home are difficult for all Servicemembers, especially if they have spent time in a combat zone or witnessed traumatic events.
  - Some Servicemembers will have physical and emotional disabilities, such as orthopedic injuries, traumatic brain injury or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Deployments are stressful for everyone in the family including children.
  - Spouses may have to make the most changes during a deployment.
  - Children must cope with a returning parent who has been profoundly affected during the war.
  - The parent who stays behind may face increased anxiety, loneliness, sadness, and a feeling of being overwhelmed.
  - A high rate of separation and divorce exists in the Veteran population.
  - VA offers many benefits for Servicemembers and Veterans when returning to civilian life.
Lesson 4 – Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

Objectives

Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to identify some of the larger military conflicts since World War II and describe the role of the military in times of disaster response.
Lesson 4 – Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

Introduction

JIM – Sarah, are you familiar with the military engagements the United States has participated in?

SARAH – Well, in school I was introduced to many of these conflicts, and I remember my grandfather telling stories about his time spent in Korea. Also, I have some friends who served in Afghanistan.

JIM – Knowing the historical context of the military engagements will help you interact and understand our clients. I’d like to review some of our more recent U.S. military history with you.

Lesson 4 – Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

Major Military Conflicts

JIM – Sarah, I want to share a couple of facts to illustrate some important points before you start exploring. Let’s look at the data on these charts.

JIM – In terms of the size of the conflicts, World War II had the highest number of people who served, around 16 million. In terms of length, the conflict in Afghanistan will pass the Vietnam Conflict as the longest lasting engagement.

SARAH – That is interesting – Vietnam and Korea had deaths in the 50,000 range, yet Korea only lasted 3 years.

JIM – Good point Sarah. Also, note that the combined deaths for the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have dramatically decreased compared to previous conflicts.
SARAH – I know that is a lot fewer deaths than World War II but I just can't help but think of all the Servicemembers and families affected.

JIM – You're absolutely right. We have to remember the sacrifices these heroes have made. That's why VA provides Burial and Memorial Services to eligible Veterans and their dependents at national and state Veterans Cemeteries across the country and in Puerto Rico.

JIM – Another thing you'll notice on these charts is the growth in the number of women in the military. Today, 15% of active duty personnel are women, versus about 2% in World War II. VA has had to reexamine the support we provide to ensure we were providing quality health and benefit services for women as well as men.

Lesson 4 – Military Conflicts and Disaster Support
Major Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

The map below outlines past military engagements since World War II, including areas where the United States has provided Disaster Support throughout the world due to unforeseen natural disasters.
World War II

- The United States entered World War II in December of 1941 following the attack on Pearl Harbor.
- The Allies (primarily the U.S., Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union) fought against the Axis (Japan, Germany, and Italy).
- U.S. military service was carried out under severe winter conditions, in the harshest of deserts, and in the hottest, most humid tropical climates.
- The war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945, when the Germans surrendered at Reims in France.
- Following the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6th and a larger plutonium bomb on Nagasaki two days later, the Japanese surrendered aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo harbor on September 2, 1945.
- Over 16 million U.S. military Servicemembers served and more than 400,000 died.
- Over 350,000 women served.
- There were over 130,000 U.S. Prisoners of War.
- 8 million World War II Veterans are enrolled in the VA Healthcare System.
- Over 3 million World War II Veterans are receiving VA Disability Compensation.
- Over 5 million World War II Veterans have been treated as patients by VA.
- World War II veterans today are all over 70 years old.
- Approximately 850 of these heroes pass away every day.

Korean War

- Sometimes referred to as "The Forgotten War," as it was overshadowed by World War II and Vietnam.
- There was no formal declaration of war by the United States.
- Over 54,000 Americans died.
- Actual hostilities occurred from June 27, 1950 to July 27, 1953. However, the war period was later extended to January 31, 1955 by Congress to define a period of benefit eligibility in the wake of uneasy peace negotiations after 1953.
- There were 480,000 American men including 1,000 women who served during the war.
- There were 7,140 U.S. POW’s during the Korean War. Of these, 4,418 returned to the U.S.
- The U.S. has maintained military personnel in Korea since 1953 due to tensions in the region. Today there are 28,500 U.S. armed forces stationed in South Korea.
Vietnam War

- United States involvement began with a group of military advisors under President Eisenhower and eventually involved over 536,000 troops in the conflict.
- The Vietnam War ran from September of 1964 (the Tonkin Gulf Resolution) until March of 1973.
- Of the 536,000 who served the war, 7,500 were women.
- More than 58,000 Americans were killed and roughly 304,000 were wounded.
- Efforts continue to recover nearly 1,800 Americans who remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.
- The average age of the wounded and dead was 23.11 years.
- After the war, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines stayed free of communism.
- Nearly two-thirds of the troops serving in the war were volunteers.

Gulf War

- After Iraq invaded Kuwait, the United States and United Kingdom led a U.N.-authorized coalition force against Iraq.
- Approximately 697,000 soldiers, including 41,000 women, served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm from August of 1990 to June of 1991 during the Gulf War.
- In the years since they returned, nearly a quarter of Gulf War Veterans have experienced illnesses that have led VA and others to research whether hazardous exposures during the Gulf War caused their symptoms.
- Today, more than 250,000 Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield Veterans receive disability benefits from VA.
- Nearly 150,000 Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield Veterans have been treated by VA for illnesses associated with their military service.
Operation Restore Hope

- Operation Restore Hope was a multinational force that operated as a peacekeeping effort in Somalia between December 1992 and May 4, 1993.
- The operation was led by the United States and sanctioned by the United Nations.
- Prior to the operation, over 500,000 Somalis died from famine and hundreds of thousands more were in danger of dying. Clan violence in Somalia interfered with international famine relief efforts.
- Almost 30,000 U.S. military personnel participated in the operation, along with 10,000 personnel from twenty-four other countries.
- The Battle of Mogadishu occurred in 1993. During the operation in downtown Mogadishu, U.S. troops became trapped overnight by a general uprising. 18 American soldiers were killed and 84 were wounded.
- The incident profoundly affected U.S. thinking about peacekeeping and intervention.
- 43 soldiers were killed and 153 were wounded during the entire operation.

The War on Terror

- The September 11 attacks, often referred to as 9/11, were a series of coordinated suicide attacks by Al Qaeda upon the United States on September 11, 2001.
- The death toll of the 9/11 attacks was 2,995, including 19 hijackers. The majority of casualties were civilians, including nationals of over 70 countries.
- OEF/OIF are often used to describe the military operations under the umbrella of the War on Terror.
- OEF, Operation Enduring Freedom, is the official name used by the Bush administration for the War in Afghanistan, together with three smaller military actions.
- OIF, Operation Iraqi Freedom, refers to the military campaign in Iraq.
- The U.S. responded to the attacks by launching the Global War on Terror (GWOT).
- GWOT is an ongoing military campaign led by the U.S. and the United Kingdom with the support of other North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) and non-NATO countries.
- The campaign was launched in 2001 with the U.S./U.K. invasion of Afghanistan in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks.
**Operation Enduring Freedom**

- After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States military entered into a war against terrorism worldwide.
- On October 7, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, efforts began to root out Osama Bin Laden, the Al Qaeda network of terrorists, and Taliban supporters from Afghanistan.
- The campaign began with air strikes by U.S. and British forces against terrorist training camps and military installations.
- Approximately 104,000 troops have served in the campaign including 15% or 14,857 women.
- Since January 2006, the NATO International Security Assistance Force undertook combat duties from Operation Enduring Freedom in southern Afghanistan, the NATO force chiefly made up of British, Canadian and Dutch forces.
- The U.S. military also conducts military operations separate from NATO as part of Operation Enduring Freedom in other parts of Afghanistan, in areas such as Kandahar, Bagram, and Kabul (including Camp Eggers and Camp Phoenix).

**Operation Iraqi Freedom**

- Operation Iraqi Freedom is a military campaign that began on March 20, 2003 and ended August 31, 2010. The campaign began with the invasion of Iraq by a multinational force led by troops from the United States and the United Kingdom.
- The invasion of Iraq led to an occupation and the eventual capture of President Hussein, who was later tried in an Iraqi court of law and executed by the new Iraqi government.
- Four countries participated with troops during the initial invasion phase, which lasted from March 20 to May 1, 2003. These were the U.S. (248,000), U.K. (45,000), Australia (2,000), and Poland (194).
- In February 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama announced an 18-month withdrawal window for combat forces, with approximately 50,000 troops remaining in the country "to advise and train Iraqi security forces and to provide intelligence and surveillance."
- 250,000 soldiers, including approximately 15% or 35,429 women, served in the operation.
- In September 1, 2010 the American operational name for its involvement in Iraq changed from "Operation Iraqi Freedom" to "Operation New Dawn."
**Disaster Relief – Hurricane Katrina**

- Hurricane Katrina of the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season was the costliest natural disaster, as well as one of the five deadliest hurricanes, in the history of the United States.
- Over 1,800 people lost their lives in the hurricane and in the subsequent floods. Total property damage was estimated at $81 billion.
- Joint Task Force Katrina was established on September 1, 2005 at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, as the Defense Department’s focal point to support the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s relief efforts along the Gulf Coast.
- More than 63,000 U.S. soldiers participated in the relief effort in New Orleans and along the U.S. Gulf Coast.
- About 45,000 National Guardsmen and 18,000 active duty troops were involved, working in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal entities.
- 20 Navy ships were on station in the region to provide medical support, humanitarian relief, and transportation.

**Disaster Relief – Haiti Earthquake**

- On January 12, 2010 Haiti experienced a 7.0 magnitude earthquake.
- The Haitian Government reported that an estimated 230,000 people died, 300,000 were injured, and 1,000,000 were homeless.
- An estimated 250,000 residences and 30,000 commercial buildings either collapsed or were severely damaged.
- Joint Task Force Haiti was the military operation that coordinated United States military support.
- More than 22,000 U.S. Servicemembers were in Haiti at the height of the mission. Of those, about 14,000 were in ships at sea, while 8,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and guardians were on the ground at any given time during the height of operations.
- About 500 soldiers from the Louisiana National Guard as well as the Arizona, Montana, Nevada, Puerto Rican and Virgin Island National Guards, conducted engineering activities and medical readiness training exercises.
Lesson 4 – Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

Knowledge Check

JIM: Okay. Let's test your memory a little bit.

☑ Select the correct answers to the questions below. Use the Knowledge Check Answer Key in the back of this book to check your answers.

True or false, the War on Terror began in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

A. True
B. False

True or false, the U.S. entered World War II in December 1941 following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

A. True
B. False
Lesson 4 – Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

Lesson Summary

SARAH – That was interesting, Jim. I really didn’t know as much as I thought about the Vietnam War.

JIM – I’m glad this was helpful.

JIM – How about we review your notes and make sure we’ve covered the most important points before we move on?

### Major US Military Conflicts

The United States has had the following major military engagements since 1941:

- **World War II (1941 – 1945)**
  - Included mainly the Allied countries of U.S., England, and Russia against the Axis countries (Germany, Italy and Japan).
  - Began with the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in 1941 and ended with the atomic bombing in Japan in 1945.
  - 16 million soldiers served including 350,000 women.
  - 8 million World War II veterans are enrolled in the VA Healthcare System.

- **Korean War (1950 – 1953)**
  - Sometimes known as “The Forgotten War.”
  - Over 54,000 Americans died.
  - There were 7,140 POW’s during the Korean War, 4,418 returned to the U.S.
  - 480,000 soldiers served including 1,000 women.
  - 28,500 troops are currently stationed in South Korea.

- **Vietnam War (1964 – 1973)**
  - Was a cause of much controversy in the U.S.
  - About 58,200 Americans were killed during the war, roughly 304,000 were wounded.
  - Of the 536,000 soldiers deployed, 7,500 were women.
  - Nearly two-thirds of the soldiers were volunteers.

- **The Gulf War (1990 - 1991)**
  - A coalition response against Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.
  - Approximately 697,000 soldiers including 41,000 women served.
  - More than 250,000 Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield Veterans receive disability benefits from VA.

  - Operation Restore Hope was a multinational force that operated as a peacekeeping effort in Somalia.
  - The Battle of Mogadishu occurred in 1993. During the operation in downtown Mogadishu, U.S. troops became trapped overnight by a general uprising. 18 American soldiers were killed and 84 were wounded.
Major US Military Conflicts, continued

- The Global War on Terror
  - A response to the 9/11 attacks in 2001 by Al Qaeda.
  - An ongoing military campaign led by the U.S. and the United Kingdom with the support of other countries.

- Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)
  - An ongoing military campaign in Afghanistan in response to the 9/11 attacks.
  - U.S. forces are attempting to root out Osama bin Laden, the Al Qaeda network of terrorists, and Taliban supporters from Afghanistan.
  - Approximately 104,000 troops are serving, 15% are women.

- Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)
  - A military campaign in Iraq that removed Saddam Hussein from power and battled Iraqi insurgency and Al-Qaeda.
  - The Operation began in 2003 and ended in 2010.
  - Approximately 248,000 soldiers served, 15% are women.

- The military also supports national and international natural disasters, i.e.; Hurricane Katrina, Haiti Earthquake.
Lesson 5 – Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to identify uniforms, markings, and categories of ranks. You will also be able to describe military courtesies and how they impact the way that VA works with Veterans and Servicemembers.
Lesson 5 – Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

Introduction

JIM – It’s really important here at VA that Veterans and Servicemembers be treated with the respect they have earned while serving our Nation.

JIM – And it starts when they walk through the door or pick up the phone. Even the way we greet someone can make a difference. Think of the difference between “Next” and “How can I help you, Captain Johnson?”

SARAH – I’m really not sure I’d know what their titles are.

JIM – It’s acceptable to address someone as Mr. or Ms. Or if you have their title on record, you can use it.

SARAH – Even if they are not in uniform?

JIM – The best advice I can give you is to address them based on how they introduce themselves. If a Veteran is not in uniform but introduces himself as Captain Johnson, then you should call him Captain Johnson. It’s also acceptable, if he introduces himself as Bill Johnson, to ask how he would like to be addressed.

JIM – The structure of rank is probably one of the most confusing aspects of the military, but this system of naming, numbering, and distinguishing the “pecking order” is what drives nearly all interactions in the military. It is useful to VA employees in understanding their military experience.
Lesson 5 – Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

Overview

JIM – First, let me provide you with a breakdown of the different branches of the military and how you should refer to Servicemembers of each branch. Do you know what they are?

SARAH – No. I know that Army Servicemembers are called soldiers.

JIM – Correct. An Army Servicemember is a soldier, the Air Force an airmen; everyone in the Navy is a sailor; all of the Marines are marines, and the Coast Guard Servicemember is a guardian.

SARAH – That makes sense. I’m sure they must have a lot of pride in what they do.

JIM – Very true. And addressing our clients properly, and with respect and courtesy, is a good habit to get into here at VA

Lesson 5 – Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

Military Ranks

SARAH – I find the ranks very confusing.

JIM – It’s easy to get confused. But let me explain a few basics that may help.

JIM – Let’s look at the Servicemembers in these photographs. They all belong to the military, which includes three general categories of rank – Enlisted, Warrant Officers, and Commissioned Officers.
Characteristics of Enlisted personnel:

- Enlisted ranks are for those who entered the military without going through any formal officer training programs.
- The education level may vary from right out of high school to having a master’s degree.
- As enlisted personnel progress through the ranks their leadership responsibilities increase significantly. This responsibility is recognized formally by the use of the terms Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) and Petty Officer.
- Enlisted members are also referred to by their pay grade such as “E-1” or “E-6.”
- Pay grades are the same across services, although the corresponding rank might have a different name. For example, a Servicemember at the pay grade of E-4 would be a corporal in the Marines and Army, a Senior Airman in the Air Force, and a Petty Officer Third Class in the Navy.

Characteristics of Warrant Officers:

- Warrant Officers are highly specialized experts in specific career fields.
- Their purpose is to provide specialized knowledge and instruction in their primary specialty (e.g., a Traffic Analysis Technician).
- Warrant Officers do not focus on increased levels of command and staff duty positions like Commissioned Officers who are generalists.
- There are no Warrant Officers in the Air Force.
Characteristics of Commissioned Officers:

- Generally have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree. Additional advanced degrees are encouraged to continue to be promoted.
- Each branch of the military has their own equivalent to Officer Candidate School. The courses generally last from ten to seventeen weeks and include classroom instruction in military subjects, physical training, and leadership.
- Commissioned ranks are the highest in the military. These officers hold presidential commissions and are confirmed in their ranks by the Senate.
- Commissioned Officers do not specialize as much as enlisted personnel and Warrant Officers.
- As an officer moves up in rank, he or she gains more experience in different areas with the ultimate goal of taking command over more and more troops.

Pay grade characteristics of Army, Air Force and Marine Corps officers:

- Company – officers in the pay grades of O-1 to O-3.
- Field – officers in pay grades O-4 to O-6.
- General – officers in pay grades O-7 and higher.

Pay grade characteristics of Navy:

- Junior – officers in the pay grades of O-1 to O-3.
- Mid – officers in pay grades O-4 to O-6.
- Flag – officers in pay grades O-7 and higher.

Lesson 5 – Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

Military Ranks: Uniforms and Insignia

SARAH – Will the Veterans I meet at VA be in uniform?

JIM – Not usually, unless they are Active Duty or attending a special event. The military has very strict guidelines regarding uniforms – and we have a lot of different types of uniforms.

JIM – For example, Veterans are allowed to wear their dress uniforms at military services and funerals, weddings, parades, ceremonies, that type of thing.
SARAH – Dress uniforms? What other types of uniforms are there?

JIM – It would take days to show you all of the military uniforms, but let me show you a few. Look through these. It will give you an idea of the main types of uniforms for the military. You won’t see any battle rattle working at VA, but it will give you an idea of what the Veterans have to carry around. It’s pretty impressive.

A. Female Navy Service Uniform
B. Navy Working Uniform
C. Air Force Airman Battle Uniform
D. Coast Guard Operational Dress Uniform
E. Marine Corps Combat Uniform
F. Army Combat Uniform
G. Air Force Dress Uniform
H. Male Navy Service Uniform
I. Army Service Uniform
J. Combat Gear
K. Marine Corps Dress Uniform
L. Navy Dress White, Khakis, Blue

SARAH – One thing I noticed about the dress uniforms are the number of markings and insignia on them.

JIM – Yes. In the military we have a culture of earning rank and earning respect. The dress uniforms are designed to display symbols that show what a Serviceman or woman has earned.

SARAH – Do I need to know all that?

JIM – No, the most important thing you need to know is that every Servicemember and Veteran should be treated with respect, no matter what. They should always be referred to as Mr. or Ms., if you are unaware of their rank.
JIM – When you do encounter someone in uniform, remember that uniform markings between the branches of the military differ. As a rule of thumb it’s best to look at their shoulders, lapels, and sleeves to help you determine the military branch and rank - the more stars and bars, the higher the rank.

Lesson 5 – Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs
Customs and Courtesies

SARAH – Now I understand why titles are so important in the military. I remember my grandfather would always want to be addressed as Sergeant.

JIM – Yes. Military customs and courtesies are important for us to understand because they are such a way of life for Veterans. Understanding them makes it easier to interact with the Veterans we serve.

SARAH – As I recall various conversations I’ve had with friends who served in the military, I’m starting to understand that it all starts with recognizing that respect and high levels of service are of the utmost importance to Servicemembers. Employees working at VA should always remember that.

JIM – You are absolutely correct, Sarah! Now, let’s talk about some other aspects of military culture that might come into play when interacting with our clients at VA.

Lesson 5 – Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs
Answering a Question

JIM – Let’s talk about what is expected of a VA employee when asked a question. Here at VA, providing the best service to every Servicemember and Veteran that walks through our doors is our top priority. All Veterans should be treated with the dignity and respect they have earned.

JIM – Let’s say someone asks you a question. It’s common courtesy at VA to maintain eye contact, attempt to gain an accurate understanding of the question, and provide an answer or solution to the problem at hand.
SARAH — And if I don’t know the answer?

JIM — If you do not have a ready answer, make sure you explain that you will do your best to find an answer. If that doesn’t work, find someone who does and make a warm handoff to that person.

JIM — This shows that you’ve done your homework to provide them with information that will help them.

Lesson 5 — Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

Military Customs, When to Stand

JIM — Another protocol from the military is when to stand and when not to stand.

SARAH — So, are there times when it is a requirement for everyone to stand?

JIM — There are a few. It’s an important custom in the military to show respect for others by getting to your feet. It is expected of all civilians working at VA to stand during the following events:

- Posting of the colors/retiring of the colors.
- Singing of the National Anthem (ours and the host nation’s).
- During the Invocation.
- When there are flags passing in review.
- During the division and military song.
- When a senior officer walks into the room at an official gathering and is announced.

SARAH — When is it customary for civilians to salute the flag? I never know if I’m doing the right thing.

JIM — Civilians don’t engage in formal military salute, but should show respect for the flag by placing their right hand over their heart. You would do this:

- When outdoors only, although it’s not inappropriate to do it indoors.
- During the playing of the “Star Spangled Banner.”
- When the American flag passes, like in a parade or at a funeral.
- When reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

SARAH — Those were some really helpful tips! Thank you.

JIM — No problem at all! And if you’re ever in doubt, always follow the guidelines and protocol specific to your facility.
Lesson 5 – Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

Knowledge Check

JIM- Okay. Let's test your memory a little bit.

Select the correct answers to the questions below. Use the Knowledge Check Answer Key in the back of this book to check your answers.

The Military is comprised of three categories of rank. What are they?

A. Non Commissioned Officers, Enlisted Officers, and Warrant Officers
B. Specialists, Warrant Officers, and Enlisted
C. Enlisted, Commissioned Officers, and Specialists
D. Enlisted, Warrant Officers, and Commissioned Officers

Which of the following branches of the military does NOT have a Warrant Officer?

A. U.S. Army
B. U.S. Air Force
C. U.S. Navy / Coast Guard
D. U.S. Marine Corps
Lesson 5 – Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

Lesson Summary

JIM – So, do you think you have all the information you need to respond to a Veteran or Servicemember?

SARAH – I think so. I’ve made some notes so I’ll remember the important points.

JIM – Let’s review those notes to make sure you’ve covered it all.

### Ranks, Titles, and Customs

Remember the following when interacting with Servicemembers:

- Recognize and greet every member of the military. Active duty Servicemembers may want to be addressed by their military rank, while Veterans are generally addressed as Mr., Mrs., Ms., it is imperative that you listen to how people at VA introduce themselves to you.
- Always use their correct title – shows respect for those who have served our country
- Servicemembers refer to themselves as:
  - Army – Soldier
  - Air Force – Airman
  - Navy – Sailor
  - Marine Corps – Marine
  - Coast Guard – Guardian
- The military is comprised of three general categories:
  - Enlisted
  - Warrant Officers
  - Commissioned Officers
- The military has ingrained the tradition of respect into its Servicemembers so it becomes a way of life for them.
- Knowing how to answer a question is critical to your success as a VA employee. When asked a question, it’s common courtesy at the VA to:
  - Maintain eye contact.
  - Attempt to gain an accurate understanding of the question.
  - Provide an answer or solution if at all possible.
  - If you do not have an immediate answer, tell them that you will exhaust your resources to find an answer.
  - Find someone who can better assist them.
Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies

Objectives

VA Practices and Courtesies

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to identify practices and courtesies which you can apply in your work at VA using your knowledge of military culture.
Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies

Introduction

JIM – We have covered a lot of material today.

SARAH – Yes we have. It was so helpful to learn about Veterans and the Military Culture. I’m sure it will have an impact on my ability to help serve Veterans and Servicemembers at VA.

JIM – It is very important. The most important thing is respect.

SARAH – I agree. And this information gave me a high level of respect for our Veterans.

JIM – Alright then, you’re ready to go to work. Let me know if you have any more questions about military culture though. We really just skimmed the surface today.

Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies

Review Introduction

ANNA – Sarah! How was your first day at VA? Did you learn a lot?

SARAH – It was great. I learned so much about the military and what the Veterans go through. I feel so much more comfortable that I’ll be able to serve Veterans and Servicemembers well, now that I know more about what they go through.

ANNA – Oh, good! Fill me in. What did you learn?
Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies
Review: Branches of the Military

SARAH – First we talked about the branches of the military. Most of this I knew, but I learned a lot about some of the less well-known military services, such as the Coast Guard, the Reserves, and the National Guard.

SARAH – This information will be helpful if I have to deal directly with Veterans or Servicemembers... at least when they say what branch or service of the military they served in I’ll know a little bit more about it.

**Branches of the Military**

- Military service includes Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard, plus the Reserves and the Air and Army National Guard.
  - **Army** – Responsible for land-based military operations. Largest branch of military. Motto – “This We Will Defend”
  - **Navy** – A seagoing force to defend our seas and protect our shores.
  - **Air Force** – Conducts military operations in air, space, and cyberspace. Motto – “Fly, fight, and win!”
  - **Marines** – No such thing as an ex-Marine or a former Marine. Motto – “First to Fight.” Semper Fidelis, Latin for “Always Faithful” guides Marines to remain faithful to mission, Corps and country.
  - **Coast Guard** – Falls under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) but is still considered a branch of the military and operates with the Navy during times of war. Created to safeguard our maritime interests. Motto – “Always Ready.”

- **Reserves** – Each branch of the military has Reserve units who can be called into active duty in times of war.
- **National Guard** – There is the Air National Guard and the Army National Guard. These are state-based branches of the military. They can be deployed to other states or nations in times of emergency or war fighting efforts.
Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies
Review: Servicemembers and Veterans

SARAH – Next, we talked about why people join the military and what they go through.

I never really thought about the mental and physical challenges Servicemembers go through - basic training, deployments and combat experience, long hours, leaving everything you know behind, the loss, violence, inner conflicts, and fatigue they encounter.

And after all that the biggest adjustment seems to be returning from combat. But it sounds like VA offers some great counseling and outreach services to Veterans through the local centers.

We offer really comprehensive benefits for Veterans in addition to just the more, well known benefits and health services – education and training programs, employment services, even burial and memorial services.

I think the least we can do at VA is make it as painless as we can to assist our Veterans in receiving the care and benefits they have earned while serving our Nation.

Servicemembers and Veterans

- People join the military for a wide range of reasons.
- Each branch of the military has their own version of initial training.
  - Training lasts 7-12 weeks based on individual military branches.
- Commitment, responsibility, and long hours are required by Servicemembers, whether deployed or not.
- Combat experience is intense and can affect Servicemembers differently.
- One of the biggest challenges for Servicemembers is reintegrating after deployment.
  - Long deployments from home are difficult for all Servicemembers especially if they have spent time in a combat zone or witnessed traumatic events.
  - Some Servicemembers will have physical and emotional disabilities, such as orthopedic injuries, traumatic brain injury or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Deployments are stressful for everyone in the family, including children.
  - Spouses may have to make the most changes during a deployment.
  - Children must cope with a returning parent who has been changed profoundly by war.
  - The parent who stays behind may face increased anxiety, loneliness, sadness, and a feeling of being overwhelmed.
  - A high rate of separation and divorce exists in the Veteran population.
- VA offers many benefits for Servicemembers and Veterans when returning to civilian life.
Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies
Review: Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

SARAH – Next we talked about the major military conflicts from World War II through today. We all studied these conflicts in school, but I never thought about it from a Veteran’s perspective.

Jim showed me these charts that had the number of Servicemembers involved in each conflict and the duration. It was very interesting. And the number of women who are in the military is growing so fast! I’m sure VA has to change their services to accommodate this increase.

Major US Military Conflicts
The United States has had the following major military engagements since 1941:

- World War II (1941 – 1945)
  - Included mainly the Allied countries of U.S., England, and Russia against the Axis countries (Germany, Italy and Japan).
  - Began with the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in 1941 and ended with the atomic bombing in Japan in 1945.
  - 16 million soldiers served including 350,000 women.
  - 8 million World War II veterans are enrolled in the VA Healthcare System.

- Korean War (1950 – 1953)
  - Named “The Forgotten War.”
  - Over 54,000 Americans died.
  - There were 7,140 POW’s during the Korean War, 4,418 returned to the U.S.
  - 480,000 soldiers served including 1,000 women.
  - 28,500 troops are currently stationed in South Korea.

- Vietnam War (1964 – 1973)
  - Was a cause of much controversy in the U.S.
  - About 58,200 Americans were killed during the war, roughly 304,000 were wounded.
  - Of the 536,000 soldiers deployed, 7,500 were women.
  - Nearly two-thirds of the soldiers were volunteers.

- The Gulf War (1990 - 1991)
  - A coalition response against Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.
  - Approximately 697,000 soldiers including 41,000 women served.
  - More than 250,000 Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield Veterans receive disability benefits from VA.
Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies
Review: Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

Major US Military Conflicts continued...

- The Global War on Terror
  - A response to the 9/11 attacks in 2001 by Al Qaeda.
  - An ongoing military campaign led by the U.S. and the United Kingdom with the support of other countries.

- Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)
  - An ongoing military campaign in Afghanistan in response to the 9/11 attacks.
  - U.S. forces are attempting to root out Osama bin Laden, the Al Qaeda network of terrorists, and Taliban supporters from Afghanistan.
  - Approximately 104,000 troops are serving, 15% are women.

- Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)
  - A military campaign in Iraq that removed Saddam Hussein from power and battled Iraqi insurgency and Al-Qaeda.
  - The Operation began in 2003 and ended in 2010.
  - Approximately 248,000 soldiers served, 15% are women.

- The military also supports national and international natural disasters, i.e.; Hurricane Katrina, Haiti Earthquake.
Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies
Review: Ranks, Titles, and Customs

SARAH – Then, this afternoon we talked about military ranks and titles and some of the military customs. Jim showed me some pictures of the different uniforms and we talked about the pay grades and categories.

This is where it gets complicated, but Jim boiled it down quite nicely. Basically, if a client introduces himself by rank, use the rank – so if he introduces himself as Major Jones then I call him Major Jones.

And it’s perfectly acceptable to ask people how they want to be addressed – then you’re sure to get it right. But the most important thing is that no matter what – every VA employee is expected to provide responsive and courteous service to all Veterans and Servicemembers.

Jim also mentioned that there are additional resources on how to interact with Veterans and Servicemembers, and I can always ask my supervisor if I have questions.

Ranks, Titles, and Customs
Remember the following when interacting with Servicemembers:

- Recognize and greet every member of the military. Active Duty Servicemembers may want to be addressed by their military rank, while Veterans are generally addressed as Mr., Mrs., Ms., it is imperative that you listen to how people at VA introduce themselves to you.
- Always use their correct title – shows respect for those who have served
- Servicemembers refer to themselves as:
  - Army – Soldier
  - Air Force – Airman
  - Navy – Sailor
  - Marine Corps – Marine
  - Coast Guard – Guardian
- The military is comprised of three general categories:
  - Enlisted
  - Warrant Officers
  - Commissioned Officers
- The military has engrained the tradition of respect into its Servicemembers so it becomes a way of life for them.
- Knowing how to answer a question is critical to your success as a VA employee. When asked a question, it’s common courtesy at the VA to:
  - Maintain eye contact.
  - Attempt to gain an accurate understanding of the question.
  - Provide an answer or solution if at all possible.
  - If you do not have an immediate answer, tell them that you will exhaust your resources to find an answer.
  - Find them someone who can better assist them.
Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies
Course Summary

ANNA – Wow. What a busy day you had.

SARAH – Yes, it was a good start. I’m really looking forward to helping the Veterans who have served our Nation. It makes me feel good about going to work every day. And learning more about the military culture helped me realize how important my job is.

Lesson 6 – VA Practices and Courtesies
Making VA Veteran-centric

One of the guiding principles for VA is to be people-centric. The VA Strategic Plan calls for “a relentless focus on our clients—Veterans and their families—in everything we do.”

This training program is one of the tools we can use at VA to spread the word and to reflect on the level of service we provide to Veterans and their families.

What will you do today to serve our Nation’s Veterans?

Reference: VA Strategic Plan, FY 2010-2014 (June 2014)

Post-Test

At this time, take the Military Cultural Awareness Post-Test located on the next page. Record your answers to these questions on a separate sheet so that this book may be reused. (Answer sheets can be found in the back of this book, or answers can be recorded on any sheet of paper.) The purpose of this pre-test is to assess your current awareness and knowledge of the military. Once completed, refer to the “Post-Test Answer Key” in the back of this book to check your answers.
Military Cultural Awareness Post-Test

Answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge, writing your answer on the answer sheet provided in the back of this book.

DO NOT WRITE YOUR RESPONSES IN THIS BOOK

1. True or False: Reservists are kept “on call” only for active duty, not for stateside positions.
   a. What is true?
   b. What is false?

2. Those serving in this branch of the military call themselves “soldiers.”
   a. What is the U.S. Army?
   b. What is the U.S. Marine Corps?
   c. What is both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps?
   d. What is the National Guard?

3. This military service falls under the Department of Homeland Security and not the Department of Defense.
   a. What is the U.S. Army?
   b. What is the U.S. Navy?
   c. What is the U.S. Air Force?
   d. What is the U.S. Marine Corps?
   e. What is the U.S. Coast Guard?

4. This military service follows this mission statement: “To fly, fight, and win...in air, space, and cyberspace.”
   a. What is the U.S. Army?
   b. What is the U.S. Navy?
   c. What is the U.S. Air Force?
   d. What is the U.S. Marine Corps?
   e. What is the U.S. Coast Guard?

5. This military unit is under the command of the Governor for the state in which they serve.
   a. What is the National Guard?
   b. What is the Reserves?
   c. What is the U.S. Coast Guard?
   d. What is the Army Reserves?

6. The phrase “Coming home is worse than being there.” means this.
   a. What is a saying that officers use to get Servicemembers to return to the combat zone?
   b. What is a phrase that might be said by a Veteran returning from combat?
   c. What is a phrase that antiwar demonstrators use?
   d. What is a saying used with patients who are emotionally distraught?
7. This is what PTSD means.
   a. What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?
   b. What is Post-Trauma Strategic Detail?
   c. What is Pre-Terminal Stress Disease?
   d. What is Post-Traumatic Strength Disability?

8. These types of benefits are available to those who die while in combat, military training or after they are honorably discharged from a military service.
   a. What are burial and memorial benefits?
   b. What are widow/widower benefits?
   c. What are family healthcare benefits?
   d. What are services for caretakers?

9. This can add additional stress to everyday life for military families.
   a. What are frequent moves and parental absences?
   b. What are parental absences and deployment of a loved one?
   c. What are deployment of a loved one and frequent moves?
   d. What are deployment of a loved one, frequent moves, and parental absences?

10. This is considered one of the hardest experiences Servicemembers face post deployment.
    a. What is reintegrating into life outside of the combat zone?
    b. What is change in diet?
    c. What is adjusting to non-combat work?
    d. What is finding housing?

11. Since World War II, the number of this minority group has grown to make up nearly 15% of all Servicemembers.
    a. What is African-Americans?
    b. What is women?
    c. What is Hispanics?
    d. What is all ethnic minorities?

12. The U.S. entered this war following the attack on Pearl Harbor.
    a. What is World War II?
    b. What is World War I?
    c. What is the Vietnam War?
    d. What is the Korean War?

13. More than 250,000 service men and women who fought in this war receive benefits from VA.
    a. What is the Gulf War?
    b. What is World War II?
    c. What is the War on Terror?
    d. What is the Korean War?
14. The military joined forces to provide support for this natural disaster.
   a. What is 9/11?
   b. What is the Earthquake in Haiti?
   c. What is Hurricane Haiti?
   d. What is the mudslides in Congo?

15. This particular conflict caused much controversy in the United States during the U.S.’s involvement.
   a. What is the Korean War?
   b. What is the War on Terror?
   c. What is the Vietnam War?
   d. What is World War II?

16. This is what a VA employee should do when asked a question to which they cannot find an answer.
   a. What is tell them you will ask your supervisor when you have finished with the other clients?
   b. What is make a warm handoff to someone who can assist?
   c. What is refer them to the VA website?
   d. What is tell them you’ll get back to them within a week if you find the answer?

17. These officers are highly specialized experts in specific career fields.
   a. What are Commissioned Officers?
   b. What are Warrant Officers?
   c. What are Colonels?
   d. What are E-6s?

18. This is a common name for the type of gear worn during various military conflicts that is close to 50 pounds and includes a flak vest, Kevlar helmet, gas mask, ammunition, and weapons.
   a. What are Fatigues?
   b. What are BDUs?
   c. What are Camos?
   d. What is Battle Rattle?

19. During posting and retiring of the colors it is expected that all VA employees do this.
   a. What is bow their heads?
   b. What is continue to work?
   c. What is stand?
   d. What is salute?

20. This is always an acceptable way to address Veterans.
   a. What is “Hey Soldier?”
   b. What is by military rank, regardless of status or uniform?
   c. What is by rank, but only if they are in uniform?
   d. What is Mr., Mrs., or Ms.?
21. This section of the training was helpful in understanding the core values of the Veterans.
   a. What is Branches of the Military?
   b. What is Servicemembers and Veterans?
   c. What is Military Conflicts and Disaster Support?
   d. What is Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs?

22. This section of the training offered a glimpse of what Servicemembers go through when deployed.
   a. What is Branches of the Military?
   b. What is Servicemembers and Veterans?
   c. What is Military Conflicts and Disaster Support?
   d. What is Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs?

23. This section of the training offered information on the makeup of the military services over the years.
   a. What is Branches of the Military?
   b. What is Servicemembers and Veterans?
   c. What is Military Conflicts and Disaster Support?
   d. What is Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs?

24. This section of the training explained the difference between Warrant and Commissioned Officers.
   a. What is Branches of the Military?
   b. What is Servicemembers and Veterans?
   c. What is Military Conflicts and Disaster Support?
   d. What is Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs?

25. This is the purpose of this training course on Military Cultural Awareness.
   a. What is increase VA employees' awareness of what Servicemembers and Veterans go through in the service of our country?
   b. What is learn how to communicate with Veterans?
   c. What is learn common effects from combat for Servicemembers and Veterans?
   d. What is understand how to recognize uniforms and ranks of the various branches of the military?
Military Cultural Awareness Training

Answer Keys

The following pages include the answer keys for the Pre-Test, Knowledge checks, and Post-Test. Use these answer keys to check your answers.
Pre-Test Answer Key

Use the following Answer Key to check your answers to the Pre-Test.

1. VA benefits and services are extended to Veterans and Servicemembers who have served in this branch of the military.
   d. What is all branches of the military

2. This military service is responsible for all land-based military operations.
   a. What is the U.S. Army

3. Under the command of the President, this military service acts with the U.S. Navy during a time of war.
   e. What is the U.S. Coast Guard

4. The phrase *Semper Fidelis* has been the long-time motto for this branch of the military.
   d. What is the U.S. Marine Corps

5. Reserve units are found in each of these military branches.
   d. What are all four U.S. branches of the military; Navy, Army, Marines, and Air Force

6. This made the U.S. military an all-volunteer organization.
   a. What is ending the draft

7. Currently, this branch of the military has the largest number of enlisted Servicemembers.
   c. What is The Army

8. This generally lasts 7-12 weeks, depending on the specific requirements for each military service.
   a. What is initial training

9. This is normally the biggest advocate for Servicemembers.
   b. What is the family

10. This program helps Servicemembers and their families connect with local resources before, during, and after deployments.
    d. What is the Yellow Ribbon Program

11. This military conflict had the largest number of Servicemembers.
    a. What is World War II

12. This conflict was the longest lasting conflict since WWII ended.
    b. What is the Vietnam War
13. This military conflict is often referred to as the “forgotten war.”
   b. What is the Korean War

14. More than 63,000 U.S. troops and 45,000 National Guardsmen participated in relief efforts after this natural disaster.
   b. What is Hurricane Katrina

15. The response of these attacks led to the War on Terror.
   a. What are the attacks of 9/11

16. When greeting Veterans at VA, this is a good rule of thumb to use.
   b. What is address them based on how they introduce themselves

17. These particular ranks refer to those who entered the military with no formal officer training.
   a. What are Enlisted Ranks

18. Generally, the rank of a Servicemember can be found on these areas of the uniform. What are:
   c. What are shoulders, lapels, and sleeves

19. When flags are passing by in review, it is expected that all VA employees do this.
   d. What is stand

20. This is the name that Servicemembers in the Coast Guard use to refer to themselves.
   b. What is Guardians

21. This section of the training will be helpful in understanding the core values of the Veterans.
   a. What is Branches of the Military

22. This section of the training offers a glimpse of what Servicemembers go through when deployed.
   b. What is Servicemembers and Veterans

23. This section of the training offers information on the number of women who served in each of the wars since WWII.
   c. What is Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

24. This section of the training explains the difference between Enlisted and Warrant Officers.
   d. What is Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

25. This is the purpose of this training course on Military Cultural Awareness.
   a. What is increase VA employees awareness of what Servicemembers and Veterans go through in the service of our country
Knowledge Check Answer Key

✓ Knowledge Check - Lesson 2: Branches of the Military

Which branch of the military's core values make the acronym LDRSHIP?

D. U.S. Army

True or false, only the U.S. Marines and the U.S. Army have Reserve units.

B. False

✓ Knowledge Check - Lesson 3: Servicemembers and Veterans

Which of the following statements is false?

A. Initial training ranges from 8-12 weeks among the military branches.

✓ Knowledge Check - Lesson 4: Military Conflicts and Disaster Support

True or false, the War on Terror began in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

A. True

True or false, the U.S. entered World War II in December 1941 following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

B. True

✓ Knowledge Check - Lesson 5: Ranks, Titles, and Military Customs

The Military is comprised of three categories of rank. What are they?

E. Enlisted, Warrant Officers, and Commissioned Officers

Which of the following branches of the military does NOT have a Warrant Officer?

B. U.S. Air Force
Post-Test Answer Key

Use the following Answer Key to check your answers to the Post-Test.

1. True or False: Reservists are kept “on call” only for active duty, not for stateside positions.
   b. What is false

2. Those serving in this branch of the military call themselves “soldiers.”
   a. What is the U.S. Army

3. This military service falls under the Department of Homeland Security and not the Department of Defense.
   e. What is the U.S. Coast Guard

4. This military service follows this mission statement: “To fly, fight, and win...in air, space, and cyberspace.”
   c. What is the U.S. Air Force

5. This military unit is under the command of the governor for the state in which they serve.
   a. What is the National Guard

6. The phrase “Coming home is worse than being there” means this.
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7. This is what PTSD means.
   a. What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

8. These types of benefits are available to those who die while in combat, military training or after they are honorably discharged from a military service. What are:
   a. What are burial and memorial benefits

9. This can add additional stress to everyday life for military families.
   d. What are deployment of a loved one, frequent moves, and parental absences

10. This is considered one of the hardest experiences Servicemembers face post deployment.
    a. What is reintegrating into life outside of the combat zone

11. Since World War II, the number of this minority group has grown to make up nearly 15% of all Servicemembers.
    b. What is women

12. The U.S. entered this war following the attack on Pearl Harbor.
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13. More than 250,000 service men and women who fought in this war receive benefits from VA.
    a. What is the Gulf War

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   b. What is make a warm handoff to someone who can assist

17. These officers are highly specialized experts in specific career fields. What are:
   
   b. What are Warrant Officers

18. This is a common name for the type of gear worn during various military conflicts that is close to 50 pounds and includes a flak vest, Kevlar helmet, gas mask, ammunition, and weapons.
   
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