

VETERANS ★ ON ★ CAMPUS

Do's and Don'ts

When student veterans come to you with issues related to their service...

DO

- Understand that they may have commitments that aren't under their control—like reservist training, deployments, or appointments at the VA—and may need more flexibility than other students.
- Know what services are available for veterans at your university.
 - **Best Referral Option (if available):** Veteran Liaison or Veteran Services Office
 - **Questions about GI Bill Benefits:** School Certifying Official
 - **Questions about Academic Accommodations:** Disability Services Office
 - **Support for Emotional Issues:** Counseling Center, VA Hospital and/or Vet Centers
 - **Meeting Other Veterans:** Student Veteran Club
- Make sure you are referring to the right office by calling first.

When talking with student veterans about their service...

DO

- Ask open-ended questions—like “What did you do in the military?” or, “Where did you serve?”—that allow them to decide how much or how little to share.
- Keep an open mind about what they have learned about the world.

DON'T

- Ask specific questions—like, “Did you see any suicide bombers?”—that might pressure them to talk about topics they're not comfortable with.
- Ask if they've lost friends or killed anyone.
- Ask personal questions about their mental health like “Do you have PTSD?”
- Make assumptions about how easy or difficult their deployment was.
- Assume they were in combat.
- Act as if you know more about the military or conflicts overseas than they do.

When talking about military topics in class...

DO

- Be aware that there could be veterans or service members in class and that this topic may make them uncomfortable.
- Ask student veterans (privately) if they'd like to share their experiences with the class.
- Ask, “Are there any veterans here who'd like to talk about their experiences?”
- Help students define what they want to say, sometimes reframing their comments in a more objective tone.

DON'T

- Call on a student veteran or use them as an example in class without their permission.

When you're worried about a student veteran...

DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize warning signs for psychological distress:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often late or absent• Restless• Easily startled• Doesn't appear to be paying attention• Turns in assignments late or incomplete• Does poorly on exams, even when you know he/she understands the material• Agitated; outbursts of anger• Overly concerned with structure; asks for excessive clarification• Trust your instincts. If a student puts effort into class, but doesn't get corresponding results, then it's good to be worried and talk to him/her to see what's going on.
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When talking to a student veteran about your concerns...

DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let the student know you're worried about him/her.• Mention specific, observable behaviors and ask what's causing those behaviors.• Ask questions to better understand the student's need.• Feel comfortable asking if the student is a veteran.• Normalize the process of getting help.• Let someone know right away if you're concerned for the student's safety or the safety of others.
DON'T	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generalize (e.g., "You always do X. You never do Y.").• Use negative labels (e.g., "strange," "weird," "messed up," "crazy").