

# Ticket Talk



## Podcast Transcript

November 2016

### Ticket Talk Podcast: Employment Resources for Transitioning Veterans with Disabilities

**Opening:** You are listening to the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work podcast series. Get answers to your questions, access information and resources, and receive expert advice on Work Incentives and the Ticket to Work program.

**Interviewer:** Social Security wants you to succeed and become financially independent. The journey is not easy, but with help from the Ticket to Work program and Work Incentives, you can find options for work that may fit your situation.

Today we are speaking with Tom Reust and Sheriene Knox, who work for Operation: Job-Ready Veterans, or OJRV, a not-for-profit organization located in Indianapolis, Indiana. OJRV helps prepare service members, veterans, military spouses and caregivers for successful employment. Tom is Operations Director at OJRV and Sheriene is the Director of Ticket to Work. Sheriene has more than 25 years of experience in developing and managing employment programs for people with disabilities.

Sheriene and Tom, we are honored to have you both here today. Thank you so much for joining us!

**Tom:** Thank you for having us.

**Sheriene Knox:** Yes, thank you.

**Interviewer:** So, can you tell our listeners a little bit about Operation: Job Ready Vets, and the services you provide through Ticket to Work?

**Tom Reust:** Yes. As you said, Operation Job Ready Vets is a non-profit organization that provides transitional services and employment support to veterans, spouses, and caregivers. We provide mentoring and supportive services to help veterans effectively re-enter the job market, with the goal of finding long-term, meaningful careers. We do this primarily through our Veterans Employment and Transition Seminar, which is a free, week-long seminar that focuses on resumé writing, military skills translation, interviewing, networking, and using social media to find a job.

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**Interviewer:** So, job-seekers with military experience often have unique traits that a lot of employers value a great deal. Can you discuss some of these?

**Tom Reust:** Yes, veterans bring a lot of traits to an employer. One of the most valuable is their proven ability to be trained in a diversity of skill-sets and quickly become proficient. This is proven through their basic training and learning to adapt to a military-style culture that's very different from anything they ever did in their civilian life prior. Veterans are trained early in their careers that teamwork is important; and believe it is essential to meet an organization's goals and mission. This teamwork carries on when they get to the civilian workplace in trying to get teams built, and having a common goal to achieve the organization's mission. They are flexible and able to rapidly adapt to changing situations and tasks, and they bring time management skills as well in being able to set realistic goals and quickly prioritize tasks. They are often able to work with diverse groups of people and manage and effectively lead teams; and they have adapted skills that make them able to deal with adversity, and still complete the company's mission and meet deadlines. Leadership and personal management is definitely a trait that is ingrained in any veteran who served for any length of time. Throughout their career, they're challenged with a lot of tasks and with bringing teams together and leading those teams effectively to accomplish an organization – whether it be the military organization or a civilian company they work for's mission.

**Interviewer:** So, what, in your opinion, are some of the services provided through the Ticket to Work program and Work Incentives that veterans are most likely to find useful?

**Sheriene Knox:** Benefits counseling is very much a key piece. I like to speak with people and ask them to make a decision based on facts and not fear. So, we provide the facts to them so they can make their own decisions.

I believe having someone to walk through this journey with them and be available for guidance is probably one of the best services available. Being their cheerleader. In the Ticket to Work program, we provide resume development, job seeking and training, and whether to disclose their disabilities during an interview because legally, you only need to disclose if you're requesting an accommodation.

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In regards to the most useful Work Incentives, which I like to refer to as “safety nets”, I’d say the 9-month Trial Work Period – where anyone receiving Social Security Disability (or SSDI) has nine months to earn as much as they want without affecting their benefit.

So, someone who’s concerned if they’re able to go to work full time can try, and if during those nine months find that they cannot continue full-time employment, then there’ll be no effect on their SSDI benefits. However, connecting with a Ticket to Work Employment Network such as Operation Job Ready Veterans is vitally important, because some people may have unknowingly used some of those Trial Work months. Social Security goes back and looks at earnings in the previous five years to determine Trial Work months that have been used and as an Employment Network, we can gather earnings information to help determine this.

**Interviewer:** So ... are there any other resources that you often recommend to veterans with disabilities looking for work?

**Sheriene Knox:** Most definitely. If they are not in the state of Indiana and able to attend the OJRV Transition Seminar classes, I recommend that they look for those types of classes in their state, because these classes really give veterans an edge in interviewing. Most veterans are not always able to convey their military skills in a way that civilian HR managers can understand, and that’s hurtful during an interview. These classes can assist in how to and, um, practice this much-needed skill. However, if there’s no local transition classes, there are a couple offered online, along with something called the Military Translator. There’s a couple of them, but these Translators will take military classifications and provide a list of skills developed – and these are the skills to express to the civilian HR manager so that they can understand the veteran’s strengths. These Translators will also provide suggested job titles, so if a veteran is unsure of what types of civilian jobs their skills match, they’ll have a better idea after using the Translator.

**Interviewer:** Wow. So it’s almost like they’re speaking a foreign language and need it to translate into a language that the civilian workforce can understand.

**Sheriene Knox:** Either a foreign language or it could be just not thinking that the strengths that naturally come with their military service is something to speak about during an interview, which it is.

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**Interviewer:** Sheriene and Tom, we thank you both for speaking with us today. We really appreciate your insights and advice for our listeners.

**Sheriene Knox:** Well thank you. We appreciate the opportunity.

**Tom Reust:** Thank you for your time. I definitely appreciated being here.

**Closing:** The transition to employment can be challenging but it can also be very rewarding. Social Security's Ticket to Work and Work Incentives are here to help you on your path to employment. For more information about Ticket to Work or help finding a service provider to help you figure out your job options, visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/work](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work) or call the Ticket to Work helpline at 1-866-968-7842 for voice or 1-866-833-2967 for TTY.

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