

The Military Medics and Corpsmen Program: New Program-New Pathways

By MARK WHITING

The innovative and award-winning Military Medics and Corpsmen (MMAC) Program is changing the way healthcare hires veterans in Virginia. The MMAC Program creates employment and education pathways for veterans while addressing healthcare staffing shortages and supporting quality patient care across the Commonwealth.

The first and only program of its type in the nation, the MMAC Program, part of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), offers a path to careers, credentialing and continued caring for recently discharged veterans who served as medics or corpsmen. When they transition to the civilian workforce, these veterans face the challenge of their military healthcare training and experience not translating into comparable certifications required for civilian healthcare jobs, making it more difficult for them to quickly find jobs in the healthcare field. The MMAC Program addresses this challenge.

MMAC has partnered with major healthcare systems and educational institutions across the Commonwealth to provide employment and educational opportunities for program participants. It allows participants to apply hard-earned and at times, battle-tested, patient care skills under supervision while they obtain civilian medical credentials.

MMAC was created as a two-year pilot program by the 2016 General Assembly, through legislation patroned by Delegate Chris



Stolle, M.D. and Senator George Barker. In July 2016, DVS formed the MMAC Implementation Team, composed of representatives of state agencies and subject matter experts from the health care sector, to develop the Memorandum of Agreement and General Scope of Practice documents that are the core of the MMAC Program. MMAC staff was recruited and hired, and offices and infrastructure were stood up. A marketing plan was created and implemented. The first annual MMAC Partner Healthcare System Roundtable was held, and screening and referral systems and an on-line application were beta tested and activated. After a presentation by the MMAC staff to the State Workforce Development Board, Veterans Employment Committee, Virginia Senator and Navy veteran Bill DeSteph commented, "This is the way state government should work."

By the end of 2016, the process, procedures, plans and personnel were in place to launch the program. MMAC began accepting applications from veterans and transitioning service members worldwide on December 1, 2016. The MMAC staff recruits, reviews and refers eligible candidates to the MMAC Partner Healthcare Systems. The MMAC Partner Healthcare Systems determine the hiring decisions, scope of practice and potential educational opportunities.

Based on the success and momentum of the pilot program as well as suggestions from the MMAC Partner Healthcare Systems, the 2018 General Assembly unanimously voted to make the program permanent and expand the scope of supervision of MMAC-referred employees of the MMAC Partner Healthcare Systems. Governor Northam has signed HB915 (Delegate Stolle) and SB829 (Senator Barker), which will take effect July 1, 2018. The legislation will allow

even greater participation in the MMAC Program by Virginia healthcare providers, providing even greater opportunity to fast-track our military medics and corpsmen into high-demand jobs in the healthcare sector.

The MMAC Program is a prime example of the benefits of teamwork and public-private partnerships. It's a successful collaboration of state, local and federal government agencies, non-profit healthcare associations and major healthcare systems. The MMAC Program is the result of multiple committed individuals and organizations coming together as a team to serve the citizens and employers of the Commonwealth and especially those who served our country: that's teamwork at its best.

For more information on the DVS Military Medics and Corpsmen Program visit: www.dvs.virginia.gov

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"In my new role at Bon Secours Virginia Health System I am a Clinical Care Technician. I work in the capacity of an LPN but I'm not yet an LPN. When I was a Corpsman in the Navy, I was doing the same things as an LPN but now I work with practitioners, nurses and others in my practice. The Military Medics and Corpsman Program has benefited my family and it has benefited me by allowing me to work freely and do as I was trained. It really makes me excited to be in the Military Medics and Corpsmen program and I hope it will go on for years to come for other veterans who really need this program."

Shanail Romane, former Navy Corpsman/Clinical Care Technician, Bon Secours Virginia Healthcare and first female MMAC-referred employee hired.