



**VETERANS**  
LEGAL SERVICES

# Military Cultural Competency

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# CIVILIAN'S GUIDE TO MILITARY / VETERAN CULTURE

- Understanding your client
  - Air Force = Airman
  - Army = Soldier
  - Marine Corps = Marine
  - Navy = Sailor
  - Coast Guard = Coast Guardsmen
  - Space Force =
- When in doubt
  - Veteran
  - Service member
  - **Not Soldier**



# MILITARY / VETERAN CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Military	Civilian
Direct Communication	Indirect Communication
Conflicts Addressed	Conflicts Avoided (Diplomacy)
Rules Of Conduct Explicit	Rules Of Conduct Implicit
Language Function	Language Ascetic
Authority = Respect / Formality	Authority = Peer / Informality
Daily Structure High	Daily Structure Low
Emphasis On Outcome	Emphasis On Process
Tight Community Bonds	Loose Community Bonds

-David M. Joseph, Ph.D.

# KEY MILITARY CONCEPTS

## 1. Unit Status:

- Regular
- Reserve Component (Reserve/ National Guard)

## 2. Service Status:

- Active Duty – Full Time Service Member
- Active Reserve
- Active Duty for Training – (Active Reservist)
- Inactive Duty, Individual Ready Reserve, Retired Reserve or Other Status

# KEY MILITARY CONCEPTS

## 3. Branch of Service:

- Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps)
- Other Uniformed Services (inc. Public Health Service, NOAA)

## 4. Enlisted v. Officer

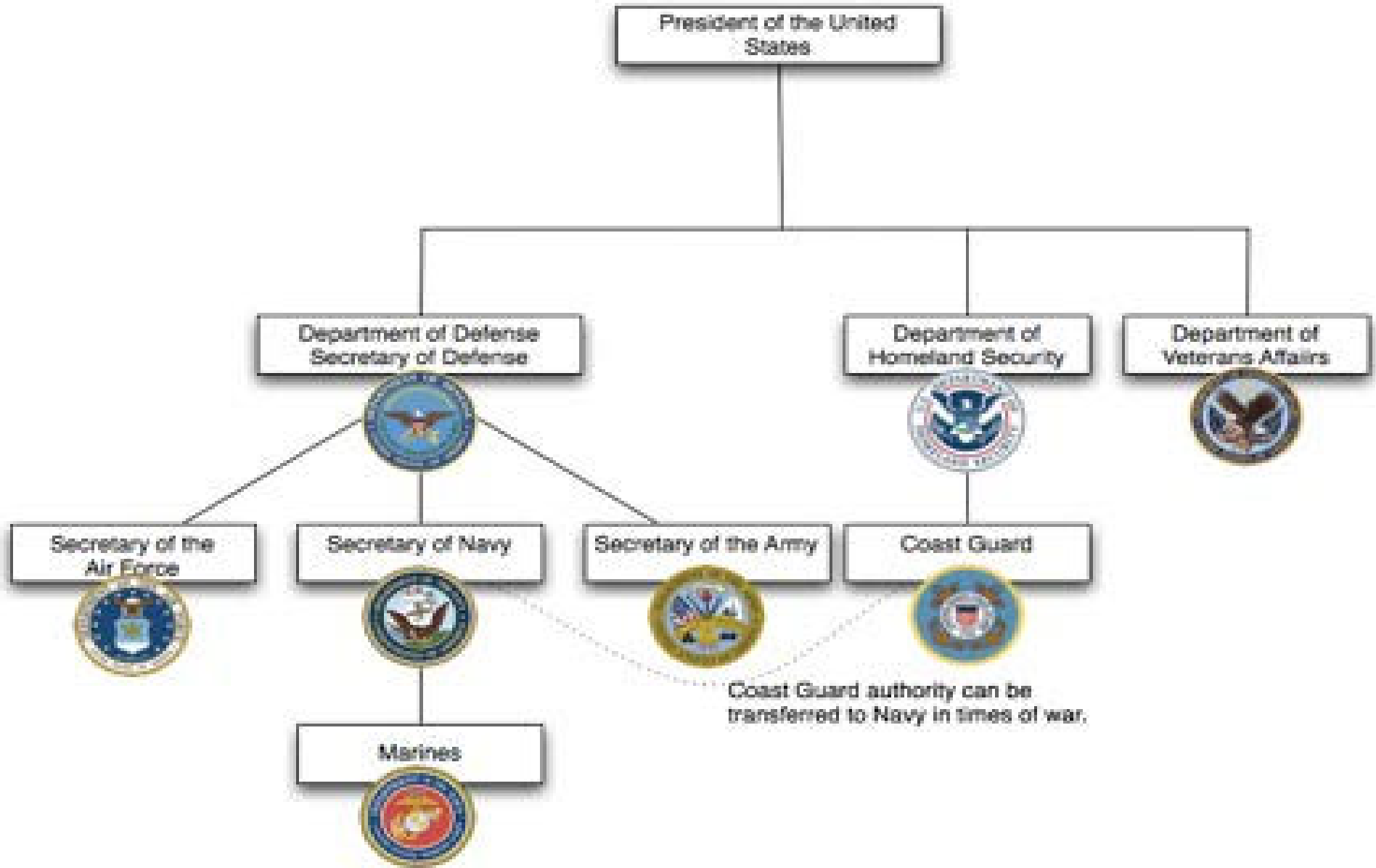
- Enlistment contracts (ETS)
- Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO)

# RANK STRUCTURE

- Rank vs Grade
  - Ranks differ widely (ie. Army Captain=O3 v. Navy Captain=O6)
  - Grade is uniform across all branches
    - Used for accounting purposes
    - E1–E9; O1–O10; W1–W5
- Enlisted vs Officer
  - Enlisted typically addressed by rank, ie. “Private” or “Sergeant”
  - Officers addressed by rank or “Sir” or Ma’am” by subordinates.
- Warrant Officer
  - Performs highly specialized duty
    - Pilot, Criminal Investigation, etc.
  - Addressed as “Chief Warrant Officer”, “Chief” “Mr.” or “Ms.”
  - WO1, CW2, CW3, CW4, CW5



# MILITARY BRANCHES



# Leaving the Military

- Administrative Separation
- Resignation (Officer)
- Punitive Separation
- Retirement
- Medical Discharge or Medical Retirement



# Transition Process

- Annually, about 175,000 active duty and 100,000 reserve servicemembers leave the armed forces
- Out-processing includes information sessions, medical evaluations, and other activities
- Challenges with transition common
  - Unemployment and underemployment: 8 in 10 servicemembers leave the military without a job lined up
  - Difficulties with securing housing, arranging finances, obtaining health care, planning for the future: 40% or more leave without permanent housing

Source: USC School of Social Work, The State of the American Veteran (2013)

# WHAT IS A “VETERAN”?

- Inconsistent standard across various administrative agencies
- Asking a client “Are you a veteran?”
- Better to ask “Have you ever served in the military?”
- Refer veteran to local VSO / Vet Agent for assistance with benefits.
- For VA Benefits: 38 CFR §3.1(d): Veteran means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.
- For UCX Benefits: 20 CFR §614.2(G) Federal military service means active service (not including active duty in a reserve status unless for a continuous period of 90 days or more) in the Armed Forces or the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration if with respect to that service—
  - (1) The individual was discharged or released under honorable conditions (and, if an officer, did not resign for the good of the service); and
  - (2)(i) The individual was discharged or released after completing his/her first full term of active service which the individual initially agreed to serve, or
  - (ii) The individual was discharged or released before completing such term of active service—
    - (A) For the convenience of the Government under an early release program,
    - (B) Because of medical disqualification, pregnancy, parenthood, or any service-incurred injury or disability,
    - (C) Because of hardship, or
    - (D) Because of personality disorders or inaptitude but only if the service was continuous for 365 days or more.

# MILITARY FINANCIAL FITNESS

- High priority for military commanders at all levels
  - Morale
  - Effects on Operational Readiness Rate (O-R Rate)
  - Operational Security (OPSEC)
    - Effects on Security Clearance
- Minor infractions for civilians can be major issues for servicemembers
  - Insufficient Funds – The “Bounced Check”
  - Higher ranks have higher penalties

# COMMON FINANCIAL PITFALLS



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# COMMON FINANCIAL PITFALLS

- 18 - 21 y/o, 3yr enlistment, living in barracks
  - Nearly all income is disposable
  - Buys expensive car with a 5 or 6 year loan
  - Marriage = ability to move out of barracks and additional pay
- Stress related to service / deployments
  - Struggling marriage / divorce
  - Poor financial literacy
  - Military discipline / discharge

# QUESTIONS?



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