



# UNDERSTANDING MILITARY EMPLOYMENT BIAS

Veterans Toolbox Talk – Part 1

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Jobsite: \_\_\_\_\_ Discussion Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT IS EMPLOYMENT BIAS?

Employment bias happens when people are treated unfairly at work because of who they are, not because of their skills. Bias can be:

- **Conscious:** You know it's happening
- **Unconscious:** You don't realize it's happening

Bias is a normal part of being human. It comes from habits, life experiences, and culture. But once we notice bias, we can choose better ways to respond.

## WHAT IS MILITARY BIAS?

Military bias is unfair treatment of someone because they have either current or past military experience. Common types of military bias include:<sup>1</sup>

- Assuming veterans are too aggressive or rigid to work on teams.
- Limiting opportunities for advancement due to perceived issues with potential deployments or training requirements.
- Seeing veterans only either "heroes" or as "damaged" because of their military service.
- Assuming certain political or moral beliefs.

There are also common perceptions or stereotypes seen in social and popular culture related to each branch of the military.<sup>2</sup>

Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps	Coast Guard
- Grunt, relying on brute force - Follow orders without question	- Spend all their time on ships with other guys - Obsessed with tradition	- Pampered - More hands off than other branches	- Aggressive - Obsessed with physical fitness	- "Not real military" - Only does search and rescue missions

<sup>1</sup> Kirchner, M. (2024, November 25). *Three portrayals of military veterans: Implications for their career transitions*. Journal of Veterans Studies. <https://journal-veterans-studies.org/articles/10.21061/jvs.v10i3.616>

<sup>2</sup> Published October 23, 2015. (2017, November 28). *The Hater's Guide to the US army*. Military.com. [https://www.military.com/undertheradar/2015/10/the-haters-guide-to-the-us-army?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.military.com/undertheradar/2015/10/the-haters-guide-to-the-us-army?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

## WHY IT MATTERS: HOW BIAS CAN TURN INTO HARASSMENT

Bias isn't just a thought; it affects how we treat people. Small assumptions or stereotypes can grow into harmful actions if left unchecked.

Bias starts with assumptions or stereotypes. Small actions, like ignoring someone's input or joking at someone's expense can chip away at their dignity. Over time, these types of behaviors can feel normal, happen more often, and increase in severity, causing fear, distress, or humiliation for the veteran who is the target of the harassment.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Which of the military stereotypes listed here have you heard before. How might they affect a veteran's opportunity to contribute to this project or team?
2. What steps can you take to notice bias and prevent it from escalating into harassment?