



THE USAA  
EDUCATIONAL  
FOUNDATION®

*Good Information for Good Decisions.®*

COLLEGE AND CAREER

# CHANGING JOBS



## OUR MISSION

The mission of The USAA Educational Foundation is to help consumers make informed decisions by providing information on financial management, safety concerns and significant life events.



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## 2 CHANGING JOBS OR CAREERS

Changing jobs is common in today's workplace. Sometimes the change can be your choice while other times it may be the result of a layoff or reorganization.

When experiencing a job or career change, you have many things to consider. This publication can help you:

- Determine whether a job or career change is appropriate.
- Understand related financial issues.
- Assess your interests and abilities.
- Transition from a military to civilian career.
- Track your progress.
- Step confidently into your new job or career.

Take your time to determine whether a job or career change is important. Do not make an impulsive or emotional decision.

## ASSESS YOUR SITUATION

Check statements that apply to you.

- I have seriously considered changing jobs.
- I do not feel challenged in my current role.
- My job no longer fits my personal goals, suits my skills or matches my basic interests.
- My career ambitions cannot be fulfilled at my current company.
- I am dissatisfied with my company's performance, direction or method of doing business.
- I seldom think about my job when not at work.
- I would consider a new job at my current salary.
- I have fewer important job responsibilities now than a year ago.
- I am earning below market rate for my job.
- I am dissatisfied with my income level and future earning potential.
- I manage finances wisely but remain unable to save with my current salary.
- I am working a second job to meet my family's financial needs.
- My work is negatively affecting my health.
- I feel stressed or depressed on days off when I think about going back to work.
- Individuals I respect suggest that I change jobs.
- My work commute is unreasonable.

Checking one or more of these items does not mean changing jobs is your only option. Think about ways to improve your current situation. A conversation with your supervisor, adjusting job responsibilities, pursuing development opportunities or gaining new perspective could alleviate many concerns.

## 4 STAY READY FOR OPPORTUNITY

**EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB OR CAREER CHANGE RIGHT NOW, YOU STILL WANT TO BE AWARE OF POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES.**

### Are You Ready?

Whether you intend to change jobs or careers now or sometime in the future, make sure you are ready to take advantage of new opportunities.

Continue to develop your skills, acquire new ones and broaden your work experience so you are as marketable as possible.

You should also keep your resumé current so you can respond quickly to opportunities that interest you.

### Network

Networking can also help open doors for you. Coworkers, friends and family members may be able to help you find job leads.

To broaden your network, consider the following:

- Joining appropriate professional organizations.
- Joining professional social networks both in your city of interest or in your field of specialty.
- Contacting alumni from your college who work in your chosen field.
- Volunteering in your community.

### Education

Furthering your education is a good way to enhance your resumé. The job market is a very competitive place so the more you have to offer the better your chances are to be considered for upper level jobs.

### Research

Even if you are not looking for a new job or career change right now, you still want to be aware of possible opportunities.

Surfing the Internet is a quick and easy way to see what opportunities are available. You can also attend job fairs and visit college career centers and libraries.

Once you have decided that a job or career change is right for you, it is time to plan your transition.

### Type Of Work

The first thing you need to do is determine what type of job or career you want to pursue. Make sure you select something that is a good fit based on your experience, education level, job skills, interests and personality.

When you have determined what type of work meets your wants and needs, it is time to start the search.

### Consider Recruiters

An executive recruiter may be able to help you:

- Identify opportunities you might miss on your own, especially when seeking executive-level positions.
- Offer useful tips for interviews and resumés.
- Let you know how your job prospects compare with those of other candidates.

### Be Selective

Before choosing a recruiter, make sure you understand their background and capabilities.

- Verify that the recruiter works for the employer and will not charge you for their services.
- Do not work with recruiters whose methods and manner make you uncomfortable.
- Take time to evaluate positions they describe.

Employment agencies and career counselors work for job seekers. Their services may include skills assessment or personality testing and career guidance counseling. They usually charge the job seeker for these services.

Outplacement agencies work with displaced employees. They can provide a wide range of services, from workshops on how to find your next job and build your network, to temporary office space and clerical support to help candidates during their job search.

### Sharpen Interview Skills

Interviewing is a skill you can improve with preparation and practice. Plan mock interviews with friends or family. Think about your professional background and skill set as well as your current and future goals.



Take time to understand how a job or career change will affect your current finances and benefits.

## Evaluate Your Finances

Answer the following questions before committing to a new job or career.

- How will a job or career change affect my finances and standard of living?
- Do I have an emergency fund that can cover 3 to 6 months of basic living expenses?
- How will this affect my long-term savings plan, including retirement goals?
- Will I have adequate life, health and disability insurance coverage throughout the transition?

### REMEMBER

Prior to your resignation, meet with your employee benefits coordinator for details on your employee benefits.

## Understand Benefits

Make sure you understand the value of your employee benefits and how they will be affected if you leave the company.

- What benefits will you be able to keep or transfer?
- Which benefits will you need to replace?
- Will you receive compensation in the form of pay owed to you, vacation days, sick days or future pensions?
- What will happen to stock options and retirement plan assets invested in your employer's company stock?

Prior to your resignation, meet with your employee benefits coordinator for details on your employee benefits.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON COBRA,  
VISIT THE U.S.  
DEPARTMENT OF  
LABOR WEB SITE  
AT [WWW.DOL.GOV](http://WWW.DOL.GOV).**

## Address Medical Needs

Before leaving your current employer make sure you address your medical needs.

- Ask when your current health insurance will expire.
- Find out when your new employer's health insurance plan takes effect.
- Schedule needed medical, dental and optical appointments.
- Make sure the new plan can cover your family as well.
- Acquire copies of your personal medical records from your physician.
- Determine whether to purchase COBRA continuation coverage.
- Obtain a certificate of creditable coverage from your employer.

## Creditable Coverage

When transferring from one health insurance plan to another, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 protects you from being subject to a pre-existing condition exclusion if you can show "creditable coverage." To ensure your rights, ask your current employer for a certificate of creditable coverage, which provides your new employer with proof of prior health coverage.

## COBRA Facts

Generally, your current employer must allow you to extend health and dental coverage up to 18 months after employment ends under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) of 1986. Compare COBRA costs to those of a major medical or short-term medical policy.

Moreover, if you have been involuntarily terminated between September 1, 2008 and December 31, 2009, you may be eligible for up to nine months of subsidized COBRA premiums.

For more information on COBRA, visit the U.S. Department of Labor Web site at [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov).

## Evaluate Life And Disability Insurance

Ensure you have adequate life and disability insurance. Determine whether to purchase new insurance or convert your employer's group policy to an individual policy.

## Manage Retirement Plan Savings

If you participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan and are changing companies, talk with your employee benefits coordinator about your options for handling accumulated assets such as:

- Checking on potential penalties and taxes on cash withdrawals.
- Transferring or rolling over to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or other qualified plan.
- Transferring to a new employer's retirement plan.
- Leaving assets with the current employer's plan.

## Are You Fully Vested?

Determine when you will be fully vested. Remaining in your job a few months or a year longer could increase the amount of money you can take with you.

Funds you contribute to your employer-sponsored 401(k) plan, are part of your "vested" balance, but your company match (and any other employer contributions) usually does not vest until a specified number of years of employment have passed.

Most companies have a vesting schedule to indicate when you are vested. Upon leaving the company, you forfeit unvested portions of your account balance.

## Unemployment?

If you have lost your job, you may qualify for unemployment compensation. You can find the nearest state employment office in your local telephone directory.

While searching for a more permanent position, consider part-time or temporary employment.

### TIP

You can find the nearest state employment office in your local telephone directory.

## 10 BEGINNING YOUR NEW ROLE

Changing jobs or careers can be an exciting opportunity to learn about yourself and what you enjoy doing. You may face periods of difficulty and uncertainty in your new role. However, when you are happy with your work, you are more likely to succeed.

Do not forget all you have learned throughout this transition. Expect to redefine your job and career path as time passes and circumstances change. Remain flexible. Keep your skills and education up-to-date. Continue learning. That way, you will be well prepared to take advantage of new opportunities when they arise.

### Manage Uncertainty

You may feel inadequate or fearful about your ability to succeed in a new role. Remember, you probably already possess skills valuable for any position including.

- Communicating effectively.
- Solving problems.
- Taking initiative.
- Working well on a team.
- Persevering in difficult circumstances.
- Motivating or encouraging others.
- Organizing individuals and resources.

Take time to review your strengths. Think about situations in which you have demonstrated them and practice communicating those strengths with others.

Changing careers can be exciting and personally satisfying. Do not let moderate uncertainty keep you from pursuing your goals.

Keeping up with the details of changing jobs or careers can be overwhelming. Use the following checklist to track your progress.

## When Deciding Whether To Change Jobs

- Evaluate your reasons for changing jobs.
- Take steps to improve your current situation.
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities.
- Supplement your education, as appropriate.
- Network with professionals in jobs or careers that interest you.
- Conduct informational interviews with individuals in jobs or careers that interest you.
- Begin evaluating finances. Build an emergency fund equal to 3 to 6 months of basic living expenses.

## During Your Job Or Career Search

- Servicemembers: Contact your career transition office.
- Evaluate finances, including savings and insurance needs.
- Acquire copies of medical records from physicians if you might be changing health insurance plans.
- Calculate the value of your current benefits package.
- Determine when you will be fully vested.
- Consider working with a career counselor.
- Research careers and jobs online.
- Consider temporary or contract work.
- Sharpen your interview skills.
- Polish your resumé and proofread it carefully.
- Track resumé distribution.
- Determine if you will work with recruiters, employment agencies or career counselors.

**BUILD AN EMERGENCY FUND EQUAL TO 3 TO 6 MONTHS OF BASIC LIVING EXPENSES.**

## After Accepting A New Position

- Notify your current employer.
- Meet with an employee benefits coordinator for details of your current benefits package.
- Ask when your current company-provided health insurance expires.
- Ask when your new employer's health insurance plan takes effect. Secure COBRA coverage, if necessary.
- Request a certificate of creditable coverage for your new health care plan.
- Decide how you will handle accumulated retirement savings plan assets. Make sure you understand related deadlines and receive associated documents.

## Support Services

### Career One Stop

(877) 348-0502

e-mail: [info@careeronestop.org](mailto:info@careeronestop.org)

[www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)

### U.S. Department of Labor

Frances Perkins Building

200 Constitution Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20210

(866) 487-2365

[www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)

## LEAVING THE MILITARY

Whatever your rank or length of service, you have invested yourself in the armed services and have grown accustomed to the military's unique lifestyle. Whether you are separating after 4 years of service or retiring after 20 years, you will need to plan personally and professionally for the transition.

The USAA Educational Foundation publication, *Life After The Military*, offers more information. To order a free copy, call (800) 531-6196 or visit [www.usaaedfoundation.org](http://www.usaaedfoundation.org).

## RESOURCES



The USAA Educational Foundation offers the following publications.

**MANAGING CREDIT AND DEBT (#501)**

**BUILDING AND MAINTAINING  
GOOD CREDIT (#536)**

**FINANCIAL PLANNING AND  
GOAL SETTING (#511)**

**PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT (#508)**

**MANAGING YOUR PERSONAL  
RECORDS (#506)**

**RETIREMENT PLANNING IN YOUR  
20s AND 30s (#516)**

**HEALTH INSURANCE (#545)**

**PLANNING A MOVE (#509)**

**IDENTITY THEFT (#520)**

**INTERNET SAFETY FOR ADULTS  
(#572)**

**INTERNET SAFETY FOR TEENS (#573)**

**LIFE AFTER THE MILITARY (#539)**

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[www.usaaedfoundation.org](http://www.usaaedfoundation.org) or call (800) 531-6196.**

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