



# Under the Oak Tree



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## ACAP and a Soldier's transition

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Warriors, all of us will leave the security of Army service eventually. It is essential that all Soldiers and leaders understand the ACAP process and the services that are available as part of this great program.

The Army Career and Alumni Program is a centrally funded and administered program that provides transition and job assistance services on major installations. While public law was the foundation of the Transition Assistance Program initiative, the Army decided to go beyond the basic requirements set by Congress and established the Army Career and Alumni Program.

The Army's ACAP goals are targeted on its human resource needs and are worthy of every leader's support. First, as an employer, the Army spends more than \$500 million a year on unemployment compensation payments made to recently separated Soldiers. Each Soldier who meets the eligibility criteria is entitled by law to up to 26 weeks of unemployment compensation, and the Army must pay for it. While we are required to inform transitioning Soldiers of their eligibility for unemployment compensation, ACAP helps those transitioning understand the negative impact of unemployment on the attainment of their career goals. ACAP also provides these Soldiers detailed job assistance training, counseling and the resources they need to quickly find a job – often before they leave active duty. An Army Research Institute study demonstrated that the full use of all ACAP services reduces the time it takes for a transitioning Soldier to find a job and increases the amount of money they earn.

As important as saving money is, the Army's ACAP goals also include manning the total Army. ACAP supports the Army's active component recruiting effort by producing successful alumni. The decision to enlist in the military and, more specifically the Army, is often influenced by friends and relatives. When alumni are successful they serve as powerful examples of what Army service can do for a young man or woman's future. Those who are capable of translating Army skills, training and experience into rewarding careers are living billboards promoting the Army as a great place to start. ACAP also supports active component retention by helping Soldiers to intelligently compare their Army earnings, benefits and potential for growth with what they can reasonably expect to achieve in the private sector. Many ACAP clients realize that they need to stay on active duty in order to gain new skills, education, training and experience. In FY 2010, more than 11,000 ACAP clients reenlisted - that's the equivalent of almost 23 battalions.

Of course, as recent wars have demonstrated, the Army is more than the active component. ACAP supports the reserve component by helping transitioning Soldiers understand how service in the National Guard or Army Reserve can augment their starting civilian salaries and provide valuable training and benefits. Civilian employees are also a valuable part of the total Army. ACAP promotes Army civilian employee retention by assisting dislocated Army civilian employees to find new jobs. ACAP demonstrates to all civilian employees that the Army truly cares and will be there for them; even if their jobs are eliminated. Both military and civilian supervisors of Army civilian personnel are encouraged to refer their employees who have been adversely impacted by force reduction or A-76 actions to the ACAP Center for assistance.

ACAP exists to support the total Army. The Army expects its leaders to support ACAP because it helps the Army conserve scarce budget dollars and man the force. Finally, but most importantly, the Army expects its leaders to support ACAP because they owe it to their Soldiers. A Soldier's decision to leave active duty cannot erase his or her sacrifices and dedication. The Army's leaders have always taken care of their Soldiers.

Our nation and our Army owe a debt of gratitude to those Soldiers who volunteer to serve our country. Often that gratitude is best expressed when unit leaders give transitioning Soldiers the time they need and deserve to take advantage of the robust services ACAP offers.

All Soldiers deserve the best possible start in the civilian world when the time comes to leave the Army, and ACAP provides the knowledge and skills to smooth the way. There is no better recruiting influence in the community than a retiree or veteran whose Army experience includes being treated with respect and being supported even after making a decision to transition to civilian life.

*Second to None!*

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