Bon Secours Virginia Health System (Bon Secours) is located in Central and Eastern Virginia, where more than 160,000 people work for the Navy, Armed Services, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, making the region the largest military market in the United States. Bon Secours sees its commitment to supporting military families as part of its mission of being “good help to those in need.” What sets apart the efforts of Bon Secours is its attention to not just veterans, but also to all members of military families.

Recruiting and Onboarding: In 2013, Bon Secours set a goal of hiring 100 veterans, and exceeded the goal by hiring 137. In addition, Bon Secours’ retention rate of first-year veteran hires is 92%, and it has committed to maintaining a retention rate of at least 90%. This is due in part to proactively training managers on how to effectively and successfully transition military personnel into roles within its organization. The hospital system rolled out a program called “Workplace Warriors” through the Employee Assistance Program that includes handouts and reference materials for managers, and coaching and counseling resources for the new military employee and the employee’s family, including referrals for mental health and wellness and financial and community support programs. In addition, Bon Secours has specialized internal training on top of its two-day New Employee Orientation and partners with The Choice Group to provide therapy and job- and life-skills training as veterans transition into the Bon Secours workforce.

In addition, Bon Secours has a focus on women veterans. It spearheaded a Veteran Women’s conference in 2013 at Virginia State University and participated in the Women Veterans Conference organized by the Virginia Employment Commission. In 2013, Bon Secours hired 73 women veterans with a 93% retention rate.

Inclusion and Retention: Bon Secours has a veterans’ affinity group whose members are a go-to source for information on how to better recruit and retain members of the military. The group has formed associations with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Military Officers Association of America, Military Officers of World Wars, Wounded Warrior Project, Red Cross and USO. In addition, managers are required to stay in touch with any of their employees who are deployed.

Work-Life Assistance: Bon Secours uses flexibility as a key component of its talent practices for all employees, including veterans and military spouses. Managers are given authority to create a variety of staffing arrangements: job sharing, flexible scheduling, and choice of days, nights, evenings and weekends. Bon Secours extends time off for employees who participate in military service and provides re-employment rights. Many employees return to the same shifts they had before they were deployed. As a result, Bon Secours Virginia has been recognized every year since 2006 with the Alfred P. Sloan Award for Excellence in Workplace Effectiveness and Flexibility.

Bon Secours’ programs reflect its commitment to the entire military family, not just the employed adults. The hospital system offers three onsite child care centers for employees’ children and grandchildren from infancy to school age. Employees who have left work for active duty are welcome to continue having their children attend the centers for child care and special activities.
Bon Secours also has partnerships with local child care centers, and parenting resources are available through its Family Focus program. Bon Secours’ Family Focus program in Hampton Roads provides free parenting and family education programming for employees and the military community. This spring, Family Focus is offering classes on parenting, co-parenting and stepfamilies to Langley Air Force and Fort Eustis service members and their spouses. “The mission to serve the whole family is extremely important. If you don’t take care of the whole family, the service member can’t function the way they need to be able to work,” said Delores Greene-Price, Family Focus manager. Family Focus frequently receives inquiries and referrals from family advocacy and family services departments at military installations. Recently, the program has expanded its reach to include workshops on bullying and youth suicide and English as a Second Language classes for military spouses. Delores said she knows firsthand the stress of raising a family in the military, and she finds it particularly gratifying to work for an organization that voluntarily provides the kind of support she wishes she had had as an Air Force mom and wife.

Internal Accountability and External Branding: Bon Secours’ Vice President of Military Affairs works closely with the executive leadership of Bon Secours, including the CEO, to implement a strategy where the needs of military families are reflected both in talent practices and business practices.

On the business side, Bon Secours’ Military Affinity Committee performed a gap analysis in areas such as behavioral health, pain management, women’s health, disability physicals and medical informatics to understand how Bon Secours could better serve the health needs of the military community. The analysis offered feedback and direction to senior leadership regarding Bon Secours’ services. As a result, Bon Secours has expanded its neurology services to meet the needs of the Fort Lee community. Bon Secours also has a history of partnering with the Naval School of Health Sciences to train radiology students. Bon Secours gives the students a chance to study and train in a civilian environment. Since the mid-1990s, it has trained more than 1,500 students.

Lastly, a Bon Secours hospital in Hampton Roads, Virginia, was the first hospital to connect electronic medical records with the Virginia medical records system, improving the health of thousands of veterans in the area. By connecting those records, it has a full picture of all medical care and personal medical history of these veterans. This enables Bon Secours to treat veterans in a more comprehensive manner. As a result of its leadership in this area, Bon Secours is being asked to share its best practices with other organizations.