Improving Employment Outcomes for Veterans Exiting Homelessness: Strategies for Successful VHA Homeless Programs and HVRP Collaboration

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
July 17, 2018
Panelists

Jasmine Hayes, Deputy Director, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

Maria E. Temiquel, Director, Grants and Training
Veterans’ Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor

Dr. Carma A. Heitzmann, Director, Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services
VHA Homeless Program Office, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Charles Franklin, Community Employment Coordinator
VA Boston Healthcare System

Julia Franklin, Outreach Specialist, Veterans Training School
New England Center and Home for Veterans

Dr. Kim Cook, Executive Director
U.S.VETS – Barber’s Point (HVRP, GPD, EH, & SSVF Grantee)

Jackie S. Nguyen, Community Employment Coordinator (CEC)
VA PIHCS
Webinar Agenda

I. General housekeeping/overview of agenda

II. Background and Framing

III. Community Presentations

IV. Q & A
Federal Perspective: Intersection of Homelessness and Employment

• Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

• Federal Actions to-date

• Moving Forward
DOL Veterans’ Employment and Training Service

• What is the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)?

• Goal of HVRP

• Importance of Partnerships

• Partnership Benefits
• What is Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCES)?

• Goal of HVCES

• Importance of Partnerships

• Partnership Benefits
BOSTON VHA & New England Center and Home for Veterans

Charles Franklin
Community Employment Coordinator
VA Boston Healthcare System

Julia Franklin
Outreach Specialist, Veterans Training School
New England Center and Home for Veterans
BOSTON VHA & NECHV: Who We Serve

VA Boston Community Employment Coordinator
Any Veteran who is VA-eligible that is experiencing homelessness, or is at-risk of becoming homeless.

NECHV: Veterans Training School (HVRP)
Any Veteran from any era regardless of branch, length of service, or discharge status that is experiencing homelessness or at-risk of becoming homeless.
BOSTON VHA & NECHV: Why Partner Together

Increase access and awareness of HVRP and VHA services while reducing redundancy:

• Access
• Communication
• Unified Support
• Holistic Support
  • Housing, Case Management, Recovery, Medical
• Continuity of Care
Boston VHA & NECHV Collaboration

**VHA:** Providing Veterans the opportunity to obtain all available resources in an efficient manner, and allowing the variety of resources to work together and provide holistic support for the Veteran.

**NECHV:** Mutually beneficial support model that aims to address employment needs of a population that we both serve. The more we work together, the better the outcomes for our Veterans.
What Our Data Shows: Brockton Walk-In Clinic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Total Seen in BR WIC</th>
<th>Referrals to VASH</th>
<th>Referrals to GPD</th>
<th>New to VA</th>
<th>Referrals to SSVF</th>
<th>Referrals to CEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 15</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 16</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 17</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boston VHA & NECHV: Our Biggest Impact

Positive Experience for the Veteran

• Efficient Support
• Better Employment Outcomes
• Easier to Ensure Continuity of Care
Boston VHA & NECHV

HOW WERE WE ABLE TO ESTABLISH A STRONG PARTNERSHIP?
  • Consistency & Communication

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE WE STILL WORKING THROUGH?
  • Timing
  • Financial Support for Overcoming Barriers
  • Retention
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES:
• Don’t view each other as a competitor, work together to achieve shared goal.
• Combine resources to identify gaps in services, to work towards filling those gaps.

RESOURCES/TOOLS TO HIGHLIGHT:
• Transportation Assistance
• Clothing
• Training
Dr. Kim Cook  
Executive Director  
U.S.VETS – Barber’s Point  
(HVRP, GPD, EH, & SSVF Grantee)

Jackie S. Nguyen  
Community Employment Coordinator (CEC)  
VA PIHCS
Hawaiʻi Demographics

- State is made up of 7 populated islands – **1.43 million residents**
  - 989,000 live in the City and County of Honolulu
- Median family income for Honolulu is **$96,000**
- Median family income state wide is **$48,000**
- Minimum wage **$10.10**
- State Unemployment rate is **1.7%**
  - Lots of available jobs in the service and hospitality industries
- Cost of living is over **187%** of the national average with housing at **298%**
- Disconnect between salaries and cost of living results in high rates of homelessness
  - Honolulu has the highest rate per capita in the US
Developing a TEAM Approach

Why we needed to do something different:

• The VA, HVRP grantees & the State JVSG all provide employment services
  • 3 HVRP grantees serving approx. 300 annually
  • 3 JVSG DVOPs serving approx. 100 annually
  • VA Homeless Employment Program serving approx. 300 annually

• Some Veterans were participants in all programs and some in only one program
• No coordination between our agencies

We realized that to best serve our homeless Veterans we needed to coordinate our efforts:

• Initial team meeting in 2015
• Agreement to work together and leverage resources
• Process has continued to evolve and change over time
Employment Team

**Partner Members**
- US DOL/VETS Hawaii Staff
- Employers – specifically those hiring homeless Veterans
- Federal and State Housing Resources
- Veteran-focused Community Organizations
- Partner Members meet *quarterly* to share program initiatives

**Core Members – Case Conference Team**
- VA Community Employment Coordinator
- US DOL/VETS HVRP Grantees
- US DOL/VETS JVSG Grantee State of Hawaii State DLIR DVOPS & LVER
- VA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- Core Members meet *monthly* as an Employment Case Conference Team
Objectives

• Promote team development, effective collaboration, and closer working relationships
• Prevent staff splitting
• Avoid duplication of services
• Share strategies to motivate Veterans towards employment
• Decrease frustration and burnout
• Empower each other and our clients
• Share ideas and encourage thinking outside the box
Confidentiality

- Release of Information (ROI) must be obtained from each Veteran during the intake process.
- Universal ROI – New format for employment staff to use to talk to employers and other employment staff about Veteran’s employment goals/interests.
- If Veteran does not agree to Universal ROI, we use the old ROI for a specific agency or employer.
Employment Barrier Discussions

- Difficult to engage Veterans (e.g. low motivation, etc.)
- Criminal Background (e.g. self and community stigma, etc.)
- Medical/Mental Health Issues
- Veterans on disability income who want employment (e.g. SSI, SSDI, VBA benefits, etc.)
- Substance Use
- Cultural and diversity issues
What We’ve Learned

• Developing Strong Partnerships Requires:
  • Constant & Transparent Communication
  • **Philosophy**: Our Success is Tied to Each Other
  • Accountability & Ownership of Each Part in the System

• Additional Areas of Opportunity For Us Include:
  • Leveraging More Resources to Assist with Employment Barriers – Bringing More People to the Table
  • Developing Creative Strategies for Exposing Employers to our Veterans
Recommendations For Other Communities

• Educate & evaluate each partner’s strengths and areas of opportunity in order to maximize efficiency
• Identify the gaps in the system early on in the process and commit to continue working towards addressing those gaps
• Have the difficult discussions
• Hold each other accountable to outcomes that each party commits to
• Celebrate the little & big wins
Questions?
Additional Resources

- https://www.usich.gov/solutions/jobs
- https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/partnerships-for-opening-doors-summit
- https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/HVCES.asp
- https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/cec-contacts.asp
- https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/index.asp
- https://www.va.gov/homeless/get_involved.asp
- https://www.dol.gov/vets/
- https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/employment/
- Heartland Alliance Report on October 2017 Summit
Additional Resources

• https://www.veterans.gov/
• https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/local-help.aspx
• https://www.careeronestop.org/Veterans/default.aspx
• https://www.nvtac.org/
Thank you!

Jasmine Hayes (USICH):
Jasmine.Hayes@usich.gov

Maria Temiquel (DOL/VETS):
Temiquel.Maria@dol.gov

Carma Heitzmann (VA/VHA):
Carma.Heitzmann@va.gov