

Homeless Veteran's Reintegration Program (HVRP) Program Guide for Grantees

June 2019





HVRP Program Guide for Grantees

SECTION 1: Introduction

How to Use this Guide

This *HVRP Program Guide for Grantees* was developed to provide an overview of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP), including the Homeless Female Veterans' and Veterans with Families Program (HFVWF), and Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program (IVTP). The guide can be used by current HVRP grantees, prospective HVRP applicants, Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) staff members, and other interested parties.

The Program Guide was developed by the National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC), in partnership with DOL-VETS, with the goal of creating a comprehensive resource to support the successful implementation of HVRP. It is intended to be used as a start-up guide for new programs and staff, a reference document for experienced programs, and a collection of best practices and lessons learned. We view the guide as a living document that will be expanded and updated over time.

The guide is intended to be consistent with all regulations and guidance related to HVRP. However, if any discrepancies exist, the most current regulations and guidance take precedence.

Accessing Technical Assistance (TA)

This guide is meant to enhance, not replace, direct training and technical assistance (TA). DOL-VETS funds NVTAC to provide programmatic support to HVRP grantees at no cost. NVTAC offers a variety of products and services including one-on-one consultations, customized training, web-based training, best practices, and a robust Community of Practice. The website, <https://www.nvtac.org>, serves as the hub of NVTAC's efforts to provide access to products, services, and staff. HVRP grantees can request TA by emailing contact@nvtac.org.

DOL-VETS regional staff, located across the country, are also available to provide TA to grantees. Each grant has an assigned Grant Officer Technical Representative (GOTR) within their state. The GOTR is responsible for federal oversight and grant compliance. Any questions about guidance-related issues should be directed to your GOTR. NVTAC works closely with GOTRs to provide comprehensive support leading to successful HVRP grants.



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TA is available on a variety of topics as the following example highlights:

For questions about...	Contact:	NVTAC	GOTR
Collaboration/Partnerships		✓	
Coordinated Entry		✓	
Enrollment at the American Job Center		✓	✓
Financial Management			✓
Grant Modification			✓
Intake and Assessment		✓	✓
Job Development and Placement		✓	
Outreach to Veterans, Employers, or Partners		✓	
Program Budget			✓
Quarterly Reporting			✓
Technical Performance Report (TPR)			✓
Training for New Staff		✓	
Working with Special Populations		✓	

SECTION 2: Program Overview

Introduction to the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP)

The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) is an employment focused competitive grant program funded by DOL-VETS. HVRP was originally authorized in 1987 under the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*, the first major federal legislative response to homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act authorized 15 programs including “Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Projects”:

The Secretary, using funds appropriated and made available for the purpose of carrying out this section, shall conduct, directly or through grant or contract, such programs as the Secretary determines appropriate to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force.

HVRP and its companion programs are currently authorized under Title 38 U.S.C. Sections 2021, 2021A, and 2023 as amended by *The Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018* and the *Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act of 2019* and *Continuing Appropriations Act of 2019*. The impact of this recent legislation on HVRP is discussed in the *Participant Eligibility* section below.

HVRP is a competitive grant program. Each year, pending authorization from Congress, DOL-VETS issues a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for HVRP. The FOA describes the application and award process including critical elements of a responsive application, the submission process, and how grantees will be selected. To access the most recent FOA, HVRP



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outcomes, and other important guidance, visit the HVRP homepage at <https://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/hvrp/>.

HVRP has two core objectives:

1. To provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force, and
2. To stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans.

HVRP is intended to support homeless veterans to reintegrate into society through participation in the workforce. HVRP is about preparing and placing homeless veterans into jobs that are not therapeutic or subsidized, but rather part of the local competitive economy. However, employment alone cannot end veteran homelessness. Instead, employment is one piece of the picture, an important part of a complex delivery system that depends on close and productive collaboration between multiple providers to address the needs and barriers of veterans experiencing homelessness.

Participant Eligibility

HVRP is designed to help homeless veterans reintegrate into the labor force. In order to be eligible for HVRP, an individual must meet the definitions for “veteran” and “homeless,” as described below. However, please note that these descriptions are not the formal definitions; for the complete guidance, please see *Appendix A: Participant Eligibility*.

Veteran: A person who served in the *active* military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

Note the requirement of active duty — to meet the HVRP definition of veterans, an individual must have at least one day of active duty *not including training*. Members of the National Guard and Reserve, who were not federally activated for duty beyond training, do not meet this definition and are not eligible for HVRP. The DD-214 will clearly state whether or not an individual served active duty. Individuals who received a dishonorable discharge from the military are not eligible for HVRP unless, and until, they receive an upgrade to their discharge status.

Homeless: A person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate residence; lives in a shelter or a place not meant for human habitation; is fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence; is at *imminent risk* (within 14 days) of losing their housing; or who was homeless in the 60-day period before HVRP enrollment who have since become housed (recently housed).



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Note that recently housed veterans and veterans at imminent risk of homelessness are considered homeless, not “at risk of homelessness” for HVRP eligibility purposes. This distinction is important because The Departments of Defense and Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Act of 2019 expanded eligibility for HVRP to include:

Veterans at Risk of Homelessness: Veterans who are at risk of homelessness within 60 days of the HVRP enrollment date.

While eligibility for HVRP has expanded, the purpose of the program has not changed. HVRP is still a homeless veteran program. The changes in HVRP eligibility were designed to prevent veterans from falling through the cracks, not to change the focus of the program. Therefore, DOL-VETS limits the number of enrollments that can come from the 60-day at-risk of homelessness category to no more than 10% of planned enrollments unless approved by the GOTR and/or state Director of Veterans’ Employment and Training (DVET).

For HFVWF, in addition to the previous requirements, veterans must be female, or must be able to show that *he/she is the primary caretaker* of any dependent children under the age of 18.

If you have any questions about whether an individual meets the eligibility requirements for HVRP, please contact your GOTR or NVTAC regional lead for assistance.

SECTION 3: Program Implementation

How do HVRP grantees help veterans experiencing or at-risk of homelessness find competitive employment? Is there a standard formula that successful grantees use that can be replicated by others? Unlike some federal grant programs with rigid structures and processes, HVRP is designed to give grantees flexibility to tailor their programs to meet the needs of the veterans and communities they serve. While there is no “formula,” grantees are expected to engage in specific activities and to provide a variety of core services:

Outreach and Engagement

Grantees use a flexible, non-threatening approach to meet veterans where they are. Outreach also includes activities to engage partners and employers.

Job-driven Training/Placement

Grantees assess each veteran to determine program eligibility and to gauge job readiness and willingness to engage in employment services.

Intake and Assessment

Grantees use a veteran-centered approach to develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) based on individual strengths, barriers and preferences.



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Case Management	Grantees provide training that is targeted to the specific industries, occupations and skills that are in demand locally. Training services can be provided in-house, through partners in the community or the American Job Center.
Partnerships and Support Services	Grantees collaborate with public and private partners at all levels (federal, state, local) to provide supportive services and access to housing.
Retention and Follow Up	Grantees provide ongoing support to track participant outcomes and promote job retention.

This section of the guide will walk through each of these core components of HVRP, including a description of the component, strategies for implementation, lessons learned, and best practices from other grantees, and resources for additional information.

Outreach and Engagement

A successful HVRP program starts with the ability to identify and engage with potential participants, employers, and community partners. Outreach is the strategic process for making that connection. Since the primary goal of HVRP is to connect homeless veterans to meaningful employment, this section focuses on veteran outreach. However, the strategies and methods discussed here can be applied to other audiences as well.

In the context of HVRP, outreach means finding veterans who meet the eligibility requirements discussed earlier (veteran and homeless or at risk of homelessness) who need or would benefit from employment. That last characteristic is deliberately vague – determining employment readiness and willingness will come later. At this stage, focus on casting a wide net to help identify as many prospective participants as possible. Every HVRP should create an outreach plan that is strategic and intentional. **[See Outreach Plan Essentials on page 8.]**

Outreach Implementation Strategies

While the specific elements of the outreach plan will vary from grantee to grantee, these fundamental strategies form the foundation of an effective plan:

- *Cultural competency* – Outreach staff must be knowledgeable about the target population and have the ability to connect to potential clients regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or any other characteristic. Each veteran requires an individual approach; there is no one-size-fits-all model in outreach, and some veterans may take longer to respond to outreach



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efforts than others. **[Tip from the field: Hiring veterans to conduct outreach to other veterans who understand the military experience can help build trust.]**

- *Referrals* – Referrals are often the most effective and efficient way to find eligible veterans. A veteran referred from an internal program or community partner who is already engaged in other services may be more receptive to enrolling in HVRP. The most powerful referrals come from veterans who participated in the program. When someone a veteran trusts refers them to a program, that trust partially transfers as well.
- *Street Outreach* – Going out into the community to find veterans who are not already engaged in services is an important part of outreach. It means meeting people where they are comfortable (homeless encampments, for example) and may be the only way to connect with unsheltered veterans. Street outreach requires patience, persistence, and precautions to ensure the safety of all involved. Outreach workers must find the veterans, build trust with them, and promote the program’s benefits, which may take multiple visits across weeks or months.
- *Presence and Visibility* – Your HVRP program and the agency overall need to be both visible and present in the community. Educating the public, community partners, and veterans by hosting events can help raise awareness of HVRP. Participation in community and stakeholder meetings will also raise your program’s profile in the veteran, homeless, and employment circles in your community. **[Tip from the field: Co-locating with other partners, such as the local American Job Center or housing providers, extends your visibility and makes it easier for veterans to find you.]**
- *Stand Downs* – Hosting or participating in a local Stand Down event is a great way to connect with veterans experiencing homelessness. Stand Downs are planned and led by community service providers in partnership with the local Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC). DOL-VETS funds Stand Down grants to help with the costs of running the events. More information on the application process is available at <https://www.grants.gov>.



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- *Collaboration* – Being a good partner who is part of the larger community’s efforts and solutions around veteran homelessness is essential. Where possible, HVRPs should be part of the local coordinated entry system, participate in the By-Name list (<https://www.community.solutions/name-list-recommendations-practice>) and work closely with the local Continuum of Care and housing providers. **[Tip from the field: connecting to mainstream providers, in addition to veteran-specific ones, can extend the reach of your program, especially with harder to find sub-populations including women veterans.]**

Outreach Plan Essentials

Effective outreach doesn’t happen overnight. It takes time, patience, and intention!

- **Target Audience:** Who are you trying to reach?
- **Message:** What are you offering?
- **Timing:** When will you conduct outreach activities?
- **Location:** Where will those activities occur?
- **Methods:** How will you find potential participants?

These components are inter-related and need to be adapted for different circumstances. For example, how you describe your program to potential participants would be very different from the description given to employers. To learn more about outreach and practice developing a plan, take the NVTAC Self-Paced Training Course: Module 2 – https://www.nvtac.org/nchv/nchv2/story_html5.html

Intake, Enrollment, and Assessment

Intake and Enrollment

An effective outreach strategy will identify a stream of potential participants, not all of whom will be good candidates for HVRP. The next step is intake, an important process that lays the foundation to build rapport and screen a potential veteran for enrollment. Intake begins with an initial assessment to determine if the individual is:

- a) eligible for HVRP and,
- b) a good fit for the program.

Program eligibility is based on meeting the definitions of veteran and homeless or at risk of homelessness discussed in Appendix A. However, not every veteran who is eligible for HVRP should be enrolled in the program.



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Remember, HVRP is an employment program – only veterans who have a goal of seeking employment should be enrolled in the program. We often speak in terms of “employment readiness.” However, for the purposes of intake, a veteran should be able to participate in and benefit from HVRP services, not necessarily be immediately ready to find employment; the role of HVRP is often to support a veteran in overcoming barriers to employment.

You will start to learn this information during the intake conversation as you share details about the program and gather information about the veteran’s assets, needs, and barriers. Intake can occur onsite or in the community depending on the veteran’s transportation options. The decision to enroll the veteran in HVRP should be agreed to by both the veteran and the HVRP staff member.

Intake and Enrollment Implementation Strategies

- *Verify Veteran Status First* – If an individual does not meet the HVRP definition of veteran, homeless status is irrelevant. Veteran status must be documented with a DD-214. Other documentation establishes initial eligibility while the DD-214 is obtained, but do not spend money on the participant until you have the DD-214.
- *Take Your Time* – The decision to enroll doesn’t have to be made during the first meeting with the veteran. The veteran might not be ready to commit today but may be next week. The same is true for intake. There is a lot of information you need, but you don’t need it all at once. Collect only what is essential at the first meeting (e.g. how to reach the veteran) and focus your energy on having a conversation and making a connection, not filling out a form.
- *Information Sharing* – If a participant is referred from a partner such as the American Job Center or a housing provider, ask them to share basic information so the veteran doesn’t have to repeat everything. Ask the veteran to sign a release of information (ROI) to make this process easier. **[Tip from the field: See a sample Release of Information Form in Appendix C.]**

Assessment

Assessment is the foundation for HVRP grantees’ work with homeless veterans. Assessment is an intensive, ongoing process that provides staff with the information they need – strengths, challenges, history, and needs – to serve veterans. The ultimate goal is to get a holistic picture of who the veteran is and what the veteran wants. That picture includes a realistic understanding of the veteran’s strengths, weaknesses, barriers, and assets that will inform everything that happens next, from case management and referrals, to training and job placement. **[Tip from the field: See Learning from Assessment on page 10.]**



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HVRPs should develop a structured, but flexible assessment process to meet the varying needs of individual veterans. Please note: most “assessments” are not tests and not formal. Assessment begins with conversations that allow you both to begin to understand the veteran as a whole person, and to build a connection with them.

Assessment Implementation Strategies

- *Use a Variety of Assessment Tools* – Formal scientifically validated tools, such as the O*NET Interest Profiler, can help veterans identify careers that correspond to their interests and experience. Combining formal assessments with information checklists and conversation can provide a better overall picture for the veteran and case manager. **[Tip from the field: Learn how other HVRPs use assessment tools such as O*NET by watching this brief video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NEgv05MrCc>]**
- *Assessment is Ongoing* – Each assessment provides a snapshot of the veteran, which is then combined with other information to guide next steps. Veterans and their circumstances will change and evolve, requiring reassessment and adjustment of priorities through the case management process.

Additional Resources

To learn more about intake, enrollment, and assessment, view the NVTAC Self-Paced Training Course: Module 3 – https://www.nvtac.org/nchv/nchv3/story_html5.html.

Learning from Assessment

Focus on three categories of information connected to employment:

1. **Abilities, Interests, and Skills:** Focus on strengths. What kind of work does the veteran want to do? In what setting? What activities does she/he like? What is he/she good at? What experience does he/she have?
2. **Barriers:** What is preventing the veteran from stable employment? HVRP participants have many types of barriers including skills-based, health-related, and situational (e.g. transportation or criminal background).
3. **Supports:** What can HVRP do to support the veteran in overcoming barriers, and translate their interests, abilities and skills into a fruitful and lasting employment opportunity?



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Case Management

Case Management is the coordinated process by which HVRP participants access supportive services and training to address barriers and achieve employment outcomes. The services may be available within the program, the host organization, or through referrals to, and/or collaboration with, outside partners.

While the assessment process may provide a clear picture of the veteran's skills, barriers, and employment goals, it may also reveal difficult steps that the veteran will need to take to accomplish their goals. The case manager helps the veteran navigate what can be a complicated journey, so developing rapport and trust is essential. For many participants, the journey will require significant behavioral or attitudinal change. Change is hard and is often accompanied by mistakes and missteps requiring patience and persistence from the case manager. While case management is not linear, having a plan in place can help manage the ups and downs of achieving employment stability. The Individual Employment Plan (IEP) [discussed in detail below], lays out a path for the veteran moving forward.

Case Management Implementation Strategies

Change is uncomfortable and brings many responses from active resistance to ambivalence. Managing the emotions and behaviors that arise is critical to moving forward. HVRPs use many change management strategies effectively, including the following:

- *Motivational Interviewing (MI)* – MI is a collaborative conversation that focuses on increasing the participant's motivation to change. The case manager uses active listening and other techniques to guide the conversation, but the process is driven by the client. **[Tip from the field – Learn more about MI at <https://attcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-attc/motivational-interviewing-basic-foundation> or by visiting the MINT <https://motivationalinterviewing.org/>.]**
- *Engage in Work Talk* – Work talk means engaging in purposeful conversation with veterans about work. It challenges veterans and staff to change their perspective and think differently about their experiences. Work talk may include discussing previous successes and failures or encouraging participants to explore new possibilities.
- *Meet Veterans Where They Are* – While some veterans may require intensive services to support their employment search, others may be able to connect with employment with less support and intervention from the case manager. The challenge for case managers is recognizing where each veteran is and adapting their approach to meet those needs.
- *Case Conferencing* – Most HVRP participants are enrolled in multiple programs simultaneously. Where possible, having case managers from those programs come together to discuss common clients is invaluable. Case conferencing ensures that the



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different plans complement instead of compete with each other. Veterans may share different or conflicting information with case managers from other programs. Case conferencing ensures everyone has the same information, leading to better outcomes. **[Tip from the field: See a sample Release of Information Form in Appendix C.]**

- *Document Everything* – If it isn't documented, it didn't happen. A robust case file should include case management notes about client interaction, progress toward addressing barriers, and meeting goals.

Additional Resources

For more information about Case Management, Stages of Change, and Motivational Interviewing, take the NVTAC Self-Paced Training Course: Module 4 – https://www.nvtac.org/nchv/nchv4/story_html5.html

Individual Employment Plan (IEPs)

The Individual Employment Plan, or IEP, is crucial to successful employment outcomes in HVRP. Developed collaboratively by the case manager and veteran, and often including input from other partners and stakeholders in the veteran's employment search, the IEP identifies and lays out a strategy for achieving the veteran's overall employment goal. That strategy includes the overall goal, broken down into manageable steps, a brief description of the activities or services required, timelines for completion, and the people responsible for each action. The IEP provides a framework for what happens in case management. It is not a static document, either forgotten or rigidly adhered to after completion. To be effective it should be discussed, reviewed, and updated throughout participation in HVRP.

Some HVRP participants may lack a clear vision or be unprepared to develop an employment goal. Case managers may use Motivational Interviewing or other strategies discussed previously in the Case Management section to help them explore their interests, skills, and abilities. For more information about the key elements of the IEP **[See Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) – Key Elements on page 13]**.

IEP Implementation Strategies

- *Start Small* – Breaking goals down into smaller, more easily accomplished goals leads to early success and builds confidence.
- *Promote Accountability* – Including timelines and expectations about what needs to be done, when, and by whom allows veterans and case managers to track progress and hold each other accountable.



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- *Build Buy-in* – Developing the IEP is a collaborative process that requires negotiation and flexibility from the veteran and case manager. If the veteran isn't invested in the plan, progress will be intermittent and slow, or worse. To demonstrate their commitment to the plan, the case manager and veterans should sign the IEP; this will also give the veteran the opportunity to review the document, to ensure it reflects their interests in and understanding of the process.
- *Connect with Partners* – Veterans may be working with multiple providers to assist them with their job search or to address other barriers. Collaborating and sharing information with those partners prevents duplication of services and ensures everyone is working together to help the veteran.

Resources

Learn more about IEPs and Goal Setting in the NVTAC Self-Paced Training Course: Module 4 – https://www.nvtac.org/nchv/nchv4/story_html5.html.

Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) – Key Elements

- **Overall Employment Goal** – includes the industry, occupation, location, salary, type of work (full- or part-time), and target start date.
- **Basic Education** – the foundational skills (math, literacy, time management, and financial literacy) the veteran needs to be successful.
- **Skills Training** – what skills does the job/career require and how will the veteran get them?
- **Housing** – what housing options are available and how will the veteran access them?
- **Supportive Services** – what other services are required to address the veteran's barriers? This may include healthcare, treatment for substance use, clothing, legal services, etc. How will you connect him/her to those services?
- **Job Search** – how will the veteran identify and apply for relevant positions?

Confronting and Overcoming Barriers to Employment

As noted above, the role of HVRP is frequently to support veteran job seekers to confront and overcome barriers and challenges that prevent their finding *and retaining* employment. Barriers can take a variety of different forms and require a wide array of creative solutions. In some cases, barriers perceived by HVRP staff will not be perceived or recognized as significant by the



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veteran they are serving. While open and honest conversations are essential between HVRP staff and the veterans they serve, HVRP staff must also remember that the veteran is the “lead” in their own employment search, and both their success and ongoing investment depend on their capacity to direct and control the process.

The job development process is not linear – it’s a continuous process that is integrated into the IEP. It includes tangible activities like working with veterans on their resumes, job search, or interviewing techniques, as well as intangible support through counseling or mentoring. Job development is not limited to simply getting a job. It means looking for the right job, and being prepared to keep that job, even when things get hard. Exploring different work environments with the veteran is critical as all workplace cultures are different. Learning how to avoid and manage conflict is also important for long-term stability.

Types of Barriers

There are numerous barriers that can complicate the employment search process for veterans’ service though HVRP. These include, but are not limited to:

- Physical, Perceptual, and Psychological Disabilities
- Transportation
- Housing Instability
- Addiction
- Complex Schedules due to Child Care, Medical, and/or other Appointments
- Histories of Incarceration

Perhaps the most difficult barriers to support a veteran in overcoming is a perceived lack of motivation in their job search. As noted, the veterans must control and motivate the process — when they cannot or do not, it is very unlikely to be successful.

However, even in this case, it is important to recall that what, from the outside, seems like a lack of motivation, may in fact be a sense of fear or uncertainty in the process. Extended unemployment has a corrosive effect on self-esteem.

Thus, though HVRP staff cannot conduct a job search without the veteran’s investment, they should pursue strategies that cultivate their engagement and enthusiasm.

Discussing and Confronting Barriers to Employment

- *Reality Check* – Discussing barriers to employment may include difficult conversations to manage expectations around career choice, salary, job tasks, or hours based on the veteran’s skills and the local job market. Many veterans have high expectations based on their military occupations, which may not translate to the civilian workforce. Having



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open, honest discussions about what is realistic, and how a veteran may progress from current options to their eventual goals, is important.

- *Practice, Practice, Practice* – Mock interviews give participants the opportunity to practice talking about their experience and how it translates to a given job and to discuss barriers such as incarceration. Practicing what they will say, and receiving feedback from staff or employer partners, can relieve anxiety and allow them to adjust their approach as needed.
- *The Power of Peers* – Asking peers who have successfully maintained employment is powerful. Hosting an event where peers can share what a typical day is like at their job can help participants see the possibilities or use them as mentors. Encourage peers to share the challenges they faced and how they overcame them. Peers can be especially effective for helping veterans prepare for what comes next, after they get the job.
- *Cultivating Interim Goals without Creating Additional Barriers* – The IEP process necessitates the creation of numerous interim goals for veterans and helps break down a sometimes daunting process into smaller, more manageable, steps. However, it is important, as HVRP staff, to avoid the pitfalls of creating goals that might come to serve as artificial barriers to employment. A balance must be struck to ensure that what we require of a veteran is truly necessary to the job development process, not an imposition that may come to serve as another barrier.
- *Engaging Partners* – A quick review of the list of barriers presented above, makes clear the necessity of working closely with partners to serve veteran career seekers. HVRP cannot work alone to support veterans in their employment search, and to overcome the barriers that could otherwise derail it. HVRP's many, and always-expanding, list of partners are vital resources in the service delivery process, and their roles should be planned for and documented in the IEP.
- *Flexibility and Persistence* – Accommodating and overcoming barriers often means changing our plans, but it always means continuing to work with and support the veterans we serve. HVRP staff often need to change course, to support a veteran whose barriers mean they themselves cannot.

Partnerships and Supportive Services

Stable housing and access to support services make it easier to maintain employment by addressing some of the barriers homeless veterans face. Veterans who are homeless and wanting to return to the workforce face obstacles such as a lack of transportation, lack of permanent housing, proper working tools and attire, and involvement with the justice system or recent release from prison. Case managers will need to identify creative strategies to address these



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barriers, including the development of community partners. Partnerships with organizations that can provide needed services are among the most effective way to improve employment and training outcomes for the veterans you serve. Among the partners you should consider are housing partners, the local Continuums of Care, mainstream services, and other partners.

Safe and stable housing is critical for allowing your clients to focus on the employment search or training program at hand by meeting their basic needs and giving them a safe place to sleep and address health issues. Housing providers appreciate clients obtaining employment and training assistance, as these clients often end up with more financial independence, self-esteem, and the sense of dignity that comes from work.

Partnership Implementation Strategies

- *Talk to the experts* – HVRPs cannot and should not be experts at everything. Focusing on employment and partnering with experts to cover housing, supportive services, and other needs is a far more effective way of serving veteran clients. Many housing providers receive funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – Grant and Per Diem (GPD) for transitional housing and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) for rapid rehousing and prevention – or the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for veteran-specific vouchers, in order to provide housing and/or supportive services.
- The best point of contact for disseminating information on your services to potential clients is the HUD-VASH case manager or team at your nearest VA Medical Center. **[Tip from the field: To find your nearest grantee, visit the VA website for GPD (<https://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp>) and SSVF (<https://www.va.gov/homeless/SSVF/>)].**
- *Connect to local partners* – The local Continuum of Care (CoC) is responsible for coordinating and executing a community-wide plan to address homelessness and housing stability and creating partnerships across services and sectors in the community. Veterans are also eligible for housing and supportive services assistance from their local CoC in addition to the veteran-specific services mentioned above. HVRPs should request information on local CoC meetings, and any veterans committee meetings if the CoC has working groups or subcommittees to target specific populations. These meetings convene many of the local partners working on veteran homelessness and provide an opportunity for you to introduce your organization and the services you provide to key partners.
- *Connect to mainstream services* – Mainstream services play an important role in supporting an employment-seeker's goals toward gainful employment. These include food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), childcare assistance through the Child Care Development Block Grant, healthcare



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through Medicare or Medicaid for veterans unable to access VA healthcare, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) for your state's services related to family stability.

Additional Resources:

For more information about partnerships, see the “HVRP: Connecting to Partners at the Local Level” section of the *HVRP Grantee Welcome Packet* available at [\(insert link\)](#).

Job Driven Training

Job-Driven Training

Job-Driven Training (JDT) is a strategy for connecting workers with the training they need to meet the demands of the current labor market. JDT was designed to address three challenges: 1) employers struggling to find skilled workers to fill vacancies, 2) training programs that don't always match the skills required for in-demand jobs, and 3) workers lacking information about training resources. JDT is the “sweet spot” where a veteran's interests and preferences are the basis for receiving training that provides the skills necessary to get a job that currently exists in the local labor market. Connection to an in-demand job is at the heart of JDT. Without an in-depth understanding of the local job market, HVRPs will struggle to place veterans in sustainable employment.

There are seven key principles of JDT which were discussed at length in this Virtual Learning Class <https://manhattanstrategy.egnyte.com/dl/5swseUzp4T/>. JDT comes in a variety of forms, from classroom training to experience-based opportunities such as apprenticeships and on-the-job training (OJT). HVRP participants may need basic skills training, such as computer literacy training, math and language instruction, and soft-skills training. Many of these kinds of training opportunities are available at little or no cost through the local American Job Center, as discussed below. This type of training, while not technically “job-driven,” is essential for long-term employment and is the first step for many HVRP participants.

JDT Implementation Strategies

- *Training with a Purpose* – Training should be based on the veteran's interests and preferences, balanced against the realities of the local employment marketplace. Will the training provide skills, certification, or other credentials connected to actual jobs in which the veteran has an interest? If not, it's a waste of time and resources.
- *Stepping Stones and Career Pathways* – The first position a veteran takes in their transition from homelessness is usually not a “career job” that perfectly matches their interests and goals. Ongoing JDT provides the skills and experience needed for the veteran to continue their career development, and to grow within the field of their choice.



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- *Individualized Approach* – Don't place a veteran in training simply because there's an opening – it needs to make sense based on the veteran's overall employment goal and IEP. Does it provide necessary skills, experience, or insight that would benefit the veteran's career development? Is the veteran ready emotionally, physically, or psychologically to engage in the training? The skills provided by a training are irrelevant if the veteran is unwilling or unable to commit to participation.
- *Leverage Resources through Partnerships* – JDT requires a significant investment of time and resources. HVRP should leverage partnerships with employers, community colleges, industry associations, and training vendors to access training and share costs.
- *Work with the American Job Center (AJC)* – The local AJC is a vital partner in providing training opportunities. Learn about the specific training and services available. In some cases, but not always, the AJC can provide resources to support training. All AJCs maintain an Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) of the local training providers to which the AJC refers job seekers. AJC staff may also have insight on which providers offer training of the highest quality, and, based on labor market information, which training will have the most positive impact on the veteran's career.

Placement

All the work that HVRPs have done up to this point – outreach, intake and assessment, case management, and training – has been leading up to placing the veteran into employment. Job placement is all about making the best possible match between the veteran's skills, interests, and preferences, and the employer's needs and work environment. The fit amongst those three things occurs on multiple levels (See Placement Strategies for Implementation below). Career interest and relevant skills are definitely important, but not the only things that matter. Matching a veteran with the "right" job at the "wrong" employer won't work in the long-term.

Placement Strategies for Implementation

- *Find the Right Fit* – There are many aspects of job satisfaction that increase the likelihood of job retention. While there is no such thing as a perfect match, look for the combination of salary, tasks, work environment, culture, benefits, career advancement potential, and management style that meet the preferences of the veteran. Emphasize those aspects of the position that are most important to the individual veteran.
- *Identify Deal Breakers* – Think about things that might contribute to job loss – quitting, being terminated, or abandoning the position – from both the veteran and the employer perspectives. Deal breakers can be tangible like transportation access or commute times or intangible like an expectation to socialize.



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- *Only Fools Rush In* – Take the time to learn about veterans and employers. Use the in-depth knowledge discovered through assessment and case management with veterans, and relationship building with employers. Job shadowing, visiting the employer to know the culture, understanding from the employer what led to previous turnover, and understanding from the veteran what went wrong at previous jobs can provide valuable insight. **[Tip from the field: Quick placements may improve numbers but if it's not a good match, or not sustainable, it can do long-term damage to the veteran's future prospects and relationships with employers. Many veterans will benefit from a "now and next" approach, where meeting the immediate need for a job does not prevent continuing to work to build a longer-term career.]**

Engaging Employers

The success of an HVRP grant is built on the strength of its service to both veterans and employers. While it is natural to think of veterans first when considering the mission of HVRP, it is important to remember that providing outreach, employment, and follow-up services to employers is essential to the success of an HVRP grant, and the veterans it serves. In simple terms, HVRP has two clients – veterans and employers – that they serve simultaneously on parallel tracks. The same strategies that were discussed earlier for working with veterans – building trust, focusing on the client's needs/preferences, and providing ongoing support – also apply to employers.

Engaging Employer Strategies for Implementation

- *Cultivate an Employer Network* – When considering employer outreach, HVRPs often think in terms of sales and marketing, but building an employer network is more than that. Take a step back and think about who you know – the answer is the beginning of your program's employer network. That network will include contacts from the agency and individual staff members.
- *Leverage Connections* – Use these connections as a gateway into the local employer community. Asking an employer who has successfully hired an HVRP participant to make introductions and share positive experiences is more effective. It's the employer version of "word of mouth."
- *Agency-wide Commitment* – Everyone involved in the agency should be able to speak on behalf of HVRP with potential employers. Provide all staff with talking points and marketing materials so they are prepared when the opportunity arises.
- *Take Your Time* – Building relationships with employers takes time. Asking for too much too soon can turn off a potential partner. Ideally, during the first conversation the only thing requested from the employer is their time. HVRP staff should focus on listening



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and learning what the employer wants and needs, like the initial conversation with a veteran. Over time you will make more involved requests for informational interviews or client placements.

- *Understand the Value Add* – Hiring, developing, and retaining talented staff is the biggest challenge of any employer. HVRP’s extensive assessment and case management process can help employers find good candidates whose skills and preferences match the opportunity.
- *Ongoing Employer Support* – The relationship with an employer doesn’t end at placement. Regular check-ins, ongoing support, and recognition can strengthen the employer relationship and provide opportunities to address any potential issues. See the Retention section, below, or veteran retention strategies that can be adapted for employers.
- *Engage beyond Employment* – Inviting employer partners to visit your agency, attend events, or volunteer creates connection and may increase commitment to your program. Participating in employer-sponsored events or the local Chamber of Commerce reinforces the two-way nature of the relationship. **[Tip from the field: Host employer recognition breakfasts or gatherings to highlight successful relationships with employers – then network with who they know!]**

First Employer Meeting Tips

- **Respect the employer’s time:** Arrive on schedule and limit the meeting to 30 minutes.
- **Listen to the employer:** Don’t spend the time talking – listen and learn about the employer’s wants, needs, and challenges.
- **Speak the employer’s language:** Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- **Research the employer:** Learn as much as you can before the meeting. Ask clarifying questions as necessary.

Additional Resources:

Veterans.gov

Creative Employer Engagement (webinar) –

http://nchv.org//index.php/connect/story/webinar_creative_employer_engagement/.



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Retention and Follow Up

Placing a veteran in employment does not mean the work is done. Job retention – how long a veteran stays at a particular job or in the labor force – can sometimes be just as challenging as finding a job placement. Retention is more than simply checking in with veterans periodically to see if they are still employed. Done well, retention is a systematic approach to supporting a veteran that begins at outreach.

Focusing on retention is a “win, win, win” situation – for the veteran, the employer, and the HVRP. For the veteran, job retention is important for learning skills, earning higher pay, and building a career path, as well as providing a sense of purpose and community within their workplace. For employers, high turnover costs money and time in hiring and training new workers. For the HVRP, job retention outcomes are a required component of grant success and can have a strong influence on option year funding and new grants.

Challenges to job retention sometimes seem to come “out of nowhere.” However, it is often the case that HVRP will come to understand, and will have the opportunity to plan for, challenges to retention long before the veteran is even placed. In the section above on confronting barriers to employment, numerous possible challenges are discussed. In most cases, these challenges will not simply be “solved” prior to placement; the complexities of veterans’ lives will continue even after they are employed.

It is easiest to plan for and support retention when an employer is fully aware of the various challenges that a veteran may be facing. As such, HVRPs typically counsel veterans to be entirely honest and open with potential employers. Once an employer is aware of a challenge, they can be enlisted to help confront and overcome that challenge. If an employer knows that a veteran has frequent appointments, they can work to support a flexible schedule, where possible. If an employer understands that a veteran has not been a part of the workforce for an extended period, and that extended unemployment has a corrosive effect on a candidate’s self-esteem, they can look for ways to proactively support the veteran in their position.

However, HVRP staff must always remember that it is rarely, if ever, their role to disclose these barriers to employers, without the consent of the veteran. It is always ideal, if possible, that the veteran have these conversations themselves. Alternatively, HVRP staff can support the veteran by facilitating a conversation with the veteran and employer, together.

Job Retention Implementation Strategies

- *Start at the Beginning* – Job retention starts with establishing clear expectations around HVRP’s goal of employment and follow up requirements with veterans, employers, staff, and the community from day one.



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- *Manage Expectations* – Before placing a veteran in a job, program staff must address the expectations of the veteran client, the employer, and the staff. Be open about potential challenges and discuss solutions – the road to employment stability is often bumpy. Veterans who have been out of the workforce for an extended period or recently separated may need to learn the protocols of the civilian workforce. Make sure employers understand any limitations or accommodations (e.g. legal appointments) and how to reach out to HVRP staff for support. **[Tip from the field: Some veterans may move seamlessly through HVRP, and then suddenly relapse into previous destructive behavior because they weren't ready for what comes next. Talking about what life will be like once they are employed is an important part of the process.]**
- *Identify Stressors* – Discuss potential triggers and how they affect job performance with the veteran during case management. Teach veterans how to remove or manage stress by identifying specific action steps to take when triggered.
- *Job Loss Isn't Always Bad* – If the fit isn't right (as discussed in the Placement Section), helping the veteran leave responsibly can salvage future opportunities for that veteran and strengthen the HVRP/employer relationship. Veterans may also outgrow the position, taking the skills they've learned to move forward in their career pathway.
- *Regular Check-ins* – HVRPs are required to track retention for their grants, but that is only part of the reason to check in. Regular contact with veterans and employers gives HVRPs the opportunity to monitor the veteran's progress, identify potential barriers, and provide ongoing support as necessary. **[Tip from the field: Keeping veterans engaged in HVRP after job placement is hard. Be creative. Provide incentives, use social media and email, host peer support groups, and recognize successful placements.]**

Additional Resources:

For more information about Retention, refer to Module 8 of the VLC, Strategies to Succeed in HVRP available at <https://www.nvtac.org/nvtac-virtual-learning-classes-vlcs/>.

Keeping Up the Good Work, self-paced online training for veterans available at [http://www.nchv.org/images/uploads/Guide%20to%20Keeping%20Up%20The%20Good%20Work-10-8-14\(1\).pdf](http://www.nchv.org/images/uploads/Guide%20to%20Keeping%20Up%20The%20Good%20Work-10-8-14(1).pdf).



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APPENDIX A – HVRP ELIGIBILITY

Veteran: A person who served in the *active* military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. [38 U.S.C. 101(2)].

Homeless: According to [42 U.S.C. 11302(a-b), as amended by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 the definition of homeless is:

- A person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
- A person living in a supervised public or privately-operated shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangements;
- A person who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;
- A person with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
- An individual who will imminently lose his or her housing, has no subsequent residence identified, and who lacks the resources or support network needed to obtain other permanent housing;
- Unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other federal statutes who have experienced a long period without permanent housing; have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period; and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment; or
- An individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support network to obtain other permanent housing.

The Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018 amended Title 38, Section 2021, expanding the definition of homeless for HVRP purposes to include veterans:

- Who were homeless in the 60-day period before HVRP enrollment, but have since become housed;



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- Participating in HUD-VASH or Tribal HUD-VASH;
- Receiving assistance under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996;
- Transitioning from incarceration; and
- Participating in the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program (SSVF)



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APPENDIX B – TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

VETS Funding Opportunity Announcement

U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service

<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/VETS/legacy/files/FOA-VETS-19-01.pdf>



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APPENDIX C – NVTAC RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORM

National Veterans Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC) Release of Information

National Veterans Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC) provides information, training, and consultation to more than 150 US Department of Labor, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs (HVRP) across the country. These programs help veterans experiencing homelessness find jobs and connect to housing. NVTAC is committed to improving the effectiveness of HVRP and helping to end veteran homelessness by highlighting the success stories, promising practices, and hard work of HVRP participants and staff.

This form gives NVTAC permission to collect and share this information for educational purposes on <https://www.nvtac.org>, in training programs, and NVTAC products. The information may also be included in U.S. Department of Labor public materials or websites.

For questions about this release, please email contact@nvtac.org.

I hereby grant permission to the rights of my story, image, and likeness (collectively referred to as “content”) without payment or any other consideration. I understand that my “content” may be edited, copied, exhibited, published, or distributed, and waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product(s) wherein the “content” appears. Additionally, I waive the right to royalties or other compensation arising from or relating to the use of my “content”. I understand that material may be used in diverse educational settings, including the Internet. There is no time limit on the validity of this release nor is there any geographic limitation on where these materials may be distributed.

Content may be used for the following purposes:

- Online resources
- Conference presentations
- Informational presentations
- Online or educational courses
- U.S. Department of Labor promotional materials

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and understand the above release and agree to participate under the terms described.

Participant Name: _____

Organization/Grantee Name: _____

Organization Contact: _____

Contact Phone: _____ Contact Email: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date Signed: _____

If you would like a pseudonym to be used in place of your name, please initial here: _____