

- [Nicole] Good morning. Good afternoon, everyone. This is Nicole LaCorte-Klein. I am one of the TA consultants for NVTAC. We welcome you to our second virtual learning class, "Strategies to Succeed in HVRP." Today we have a lot of information that will, in an hour and 15 minutes, include assessment, case management, and adjusting barriers.

Please feel free throughout the presentation to drop any questions or comments you have in the chatbox. We, as always, like to be as engaging as possible to connect with all of the grantees. It's nice to see a lot of your names. It's been a few months since we've all connected with you.

And welcome to all of our new staff and new grantees that are part of the HVRP family. If you can go to the next slide, please. So, as I'm welcoming you, we'll do a few minutes of housekeeping. And if anyone has any questions or comments from our first session that took place this past Monday, also please feel free to drop those in the chatbox.

As this session is being recorded, our session from Monday was being recorded as well, and it will be posted on the NVTAC website along with this and our remaining two sessions within the next few weeks. Again, as I mentioned today, we're going to focus on assessment and the difference between intakes and assessment.

We're going to talk about... Ade Adeniji will talk then about case management and individualized employment plans, excuse me, or IEPs. And then we'll all talk together around addressing barriers. And really, again, some of the challenges, some of the barriers that you're all faced with within your programs and, of course, wrap up with questions and answers at the end.

And as I mentioned on the next slide, this session is being recorded. And participating in this session just know that your voice and/or your questions will be included in our presentation today. Next slide, please.

So, as I mentioned, if you have any written questions, please write them and select All Panelists from the dropdown menu in your chat panel. And if you have any verbal questions or, as I said, hope that you'll participate in our conversation today, please select the Raise Your Hand icon located in the Participants tab next to your name. If you have joined from a web browser, please select the three-dot icon located at the bottom of your screen and then

select Raise Your Hand icon and we'll be happy to take you off mute and have you join in the conversation.

Next slide, please. To turn on closed captioning, click on the CC icon on the bottom-left of your screen or click on the three-dot icon at the bottom-right and select Captions and Highlights. This is one of the features of WebEx main that we want to make sure everyone who needs this can participate in.

The next slide, just, again, an overview of our class schedule. This past Monday, we did our introduction session. Cindy Borden led that. If you were unable to participate, again, the recording and materials will be posted on our website. And today, Ade and I will focus on what's listed here. And our last two sessions next week will be partnership and collaboration and training and placement and retention.

So, a lot of information in a short amount of time. If there's questions, as you are all absorbing this information, please feel free to reach out to us in our contact information which is on the next slide. We'll give you the idea depending on what region you are in, who to contact. If you are new to HVRP and your NVTAC liaison has not had the chance yet to connect with you.

We encourage you to email us, introduce yourself, drop us a line. We cover the 150-plus HVRP programs around the country and we're looking forward to collaborating with you more than just talking at you. So, again, in that vein, on the next slide, you'll have the opportunity to introduce yourself.

What was really helpful for me on Monday as I was just a fly on the wall and not presenting was reading through the chatbox and seeing where everyone was from, what HVRP program you're with, and how long you've been in the program.

It helps us behind the scenes get a sense of who we can reach out to, especially, I saw lots of staff who are within your roles for six months or less. So, there's lots of information, I'm sure, that could be beneficial for us to get to you. So, please, again, feel free to introduce yourself via the chat function. And now I will move us into the next slide.

And first section of what we're going to be discussing today, which is assessment. So, on the next slide, many of you, probably all of you, at some point or another are conducting intakes and assessing the veterans that you're

serving in HVRP. Just a little bit about my background for those who I don't know.

I have been a case manager and a job developer and a job coach and a supported employment specialist for many, many decades. And one of the challenges when I was doing direct service out in the field was really trying to get to understand and know who the veteran, who the recipient of services was without feeling as if I was asking the same questions that had been asked to this individual 100 times before, right?

So, we all go to appointments. We all fill out forms. We all, at some point, feel, "Oh, my gosh. Can't one provider just talk to the other provider?" because we have repeated these questions over and over again or answered these questions over and over again. So, this intake, this one-time event to determine eligibility, to determine suitability for your program is necessary.

However, we recommend and suggest that your intake form not be an entire novel. And I say that with the utmost respect because I know for myself from visiting many, many doctors and many providers between myself and my family, again, the last thing I want to do is sit through a 10-page intake form and then when I get to meet with my provider, he or she is not spending the time to walk through that packet of information and get to know who I am as a patient.

So, this intake does not necessarily give the full picture of the veteran. This is more of a snapshot of demographics, right? It could potentially be a one-page overview. What's the bare-bones information that you will need when you're conducting an intake to determine if this veteran is eligible for your program, to determine some basic demographic information, etc.

Whereas we talk about assessment and we talk about engaging and the next set of slides will focus on, again, the data categories. It's usually not time-sensitive, which means that you can begin an assessment process and it could potentially take multiple sessions. And you may be thinking to yourself, "Well, I can do that with an intake as well."

Yes, that's true. However, oftentimes, when providers, case managers, job coaches, developers, etc., they do an intake, it becomes just sort of this document that's put in your case files and never to be looked again after you deem that this veteran is eligible for your program. What we want to stress with

an assessment and the process of utilizing assessments is that it's living, it's breathing, it's continual, it's engaging, it's...

You know, what kind of work are you interested in? And why do you want to work? And what types of jobs have you had in the past? And why? And what do you like? And what do you not like? That will change and evolve over time based on someone's experience, based on their connection with you and their willingness to share information about themselves.

So, understand that this assessment is capturing the individual on more of a holistic approach than just an initial intake form. And if we can go to the next slide, this sort of talks a little bit in more depth about the categories that I'm mentioning.

So, again, even though this circle is a bit oversimplified, but it's emphasizing the point that the veterans that you are working with are made up of various components. And of course, taking into consideration religion, and race, and ethnicity, and gender identification, and all of these other pieces that make the veteran who they are is part of what you are assessing.

So, again, when you're talking about an intake, you're gathering specific data points, their name, their veteran status, their discharge status, and all very important information. This is not to say that an intake is not necessary or important. We just don't treat an intake the same way as I want you all to begin thinking about an assessment again and really getting a larger, more holistic view of who the veteran is.

Next slide, please. And when I say holistic view, this is what I mean. It's incorporating some of the formal and informal tools. We'll talk more about that. It does take time. And it does require building trust and developing a relationship. It demands flexibility.

It demands an open mind, certainly, throughout the pandemic, and the lack of public places that have been open for past meetings and assessment, and, you know, meeting in the field, meeting at the library, meeting for a cup of coffee, meeting the veteran in his or her or their environment that they identify with is part of this holistic relationship building.

And this also really focuses on the values that the veteran is the expert and really the driver of this bus and this assessment process. And it may not always

be possible to understand the veteran holistically. We certainly understand that HVRP programs are, you know, really rushed with timing oftentimes and your numbers and the delivery of services in a short period of time.

So, we understand that this assessment process sometimes is often compressed. But how can you develop this holistic approach of addressing a veteran even within the time restraints that you are under with HVRP? If you can go to the next slide. The goals of assessment and planning.

Again, when we're talking about gathering background information about the veteran, how are we identifying what the veteran's skills are? I remember working as a job developer and talking to veterans or other people on my caseload and I would ask them, "Well, what are your skills? And what are you good at? And what do you like?"

"I don't know. I don't have any skills. I haven't worked in 10 years." How does their military participation translate to some of their skills? How does living on the streets transfer to some of their skills? Everyone has skills. Oftentimes, veterans, and others who have been out of the job search for quite some time have a very hard time identifying what those skills are, or because of mental health or drug addiction or any other substance abuse challenges or behavioral issues or the fact that they haven't connected to the workforce in quite some time, those skills may not be on the forefront of how they can identify themselves as a person with skills instead of a homeless veteran.

Really, how we identify and how we look at a veteran is all part of this holistic assessment piece that we really want to keep honing in on with you all today, that someone's skills, someone's past experiences, what their preferences are. Do they want to work inside? Do they want to work outside?

Does their medication impact them in the morning so they would be better off having a job that starts at 10:00 in the morning or noon? Or does transportation impede the ability to get to a particular site? So, the preferences and the realities based on someone's situation, whether it's childcare, or transportation, or any other factor that really impedes the veteran.

Our goal of assessing and planning for employment part-time, full-time, seasonal, whatever the training, whatever the goal is that's identified by the veteran, all of this assessment and planning and keeping in mind someone's ambitions, someone's needs, someone...

Someone may not have worked in a very long time and they're coming to... And I've worked with HVRP providers for a very long time. And oftentimes I would hear, you know, their goals aren't realistic or they want to become, you know, a musician and sign a recording contract, but they don't necessarily have the skill to do X, Y, and Z.

So, we talk about... When we are talking about an assessment and we're talking about looking at the person in this holistic way, we're talking about, "Well, what is it specifically about this particular occupation that's of interest to them?" So, if I want to be a disc jockey because I love radio and I love talking and I love listening to music, what potential other areas based on my skills and my interests and what I like could lend toward potentially developing a career based on my assessment with you as the provider that would lend toward a good job match?

So, again, keeping in mind this background information and identifying all of this rich resource of information about the veteran in informal and formal ways, which we'll talk about, is all part of the goals of assessing and planning toward job placement.

Next slide, please. And let's talk a little bit about what some of these tools are. So, when we talk about you as a workforce professional and me as an employment seeker, and how can we learn about the candidate's, the veteran's preferences through these hard job skills, right?

These are the technical skills that define employment and a career. How do we assess for them? So, do we have an opportunity to shadow at different jobs? Do we have the opportunity to look at potential certification? Do we have the opportunity to find out specifically what these hard job skills are that folks have utilized in the past?

They may not be able to return as a forklift driver because of injury or because of, you know, some other challenges that may not allow them to return to that same field of choice. But what particular skills that were these hard skills? How can those skills be transferred to other types of employment? And again, these foundational skills, whether it's someone's math or writing or communication, where is someone...

If someone has a learning disability or if someone has a third-grade reading level and the requirement for the job may or may not be at a high school

reading level. All of these things need to be taken into consideration because when we're doing our assessment and identifying these foundational skills, meeting the veteran at the level of where they are and finding job matches and opportunities for the veteran to succeed regardless of what their reading level is, is part of our job.

So, if I am a new case manager, and I am a new job developer, and I am looking to assess an individual and all I see on paper is a third-grade reading level, how is that going to be a fair assessment of what this individual can do, what the individual skills are? It may not be reading.

The job area of focus may be determined by that, but that can be part of what you're working on in terms of goal setting as well. So, based on their interests and the direction that the veteran wants to grow in the career, and, again, these specific barriers. And being realistic does not mean squashing someone's dreams. Being realistic means meeting the veteran where they are and helping them to identify what specific steps are needed and what has to be taken in order to reach their goal.

It may not be a long-term goal. Or it may be a long-term goal and might not be attainable in the short-term. But really working with veterans to identify what potential training or other supports to overcome some of these barriers. These are all pieces of why assessment tools are important.

And when we talk about tools, we're talking about, again, observing someone in their environment, job shadowing. If a particular veteran that you've worked with in the past or you have a relationship with an employer that, you know, you can bring someone on site to see how the warehouses run or what happens behind the scenes in an office or whatever this opportunity to assess and shadow is all part of your toolbox to be able to really get a full and broad picture of what the veteran is interested and can or wants to do.

You guys, keep an eye on the chatbox. If anybody has their hand up or if there's any questions, please feel free to jump in and interrupt me. I'll take a sip of water. Okay.

If we go to the next slide, which you already did. Thank you. Okay. When we talk about what information a particular tool can reveal and we're talking about what the veteran's preferences are, we talked about, you know, some of this already. Do I want to work outside? Do I want to work inside?

Do I have, you know, some soft skills in terms of the environment, the preference in my management style? Do I want to be in an environment where the culture of the workplace is, you know, the 5:00 bell rings and everyone is headed to the bar and I'm new in my recovery?

Is the transportation challenges going to prevent me from participating, you know, at the end of my shift, you know, potentially socializing with some of my co-workers? So, when we're thinking about veteran's preference and we're talking about soft skills and work culture, these are some of the areas that go beyond, remember back to that initial intake, right?

It's the demographic information. It's who they are. It's social security number. And we're keeping that to one or two pages. And this assessment piece, again, including what the veteran's communication and learning style is, understanding what the veteran's work history is.

And really, you know, what was a past job that you absolutely hated? I was fired long ago from a telemarketing job because I spent way too much time on a script and then decided to, like, skip some paragraphs, and I had to follow the script. But it was not the right match for me and I wound up being fired.

But what I learned from that is that, you know, I could not be in sales. I'm not one to connect with someone and ask for an hour of their time in return for X, Y, and Z. So, every failed or not even failed, but every opportunity that may not have worked out the way that the veteran would have wanted it to, is a learning opportunity.

And I oftentimes have heard, you know, veterans will talk a lot about what went wrong on jobs and what the managers did or didn't do or what co-workers did or didn't do. And we really could take a step back and look at this as an opportunity to understand what type of environment the veteran felt comfortable or didn't like or a hands-on boss or a hands-off boss or what type of communication works for the veteran in terms of connecting with a supervisor.

And we'll talk about this in further classes. But just to quickly say that, you know, thoughts of job retention and environment and sustainability really begins during your assessment process that happens at the beginning because if veterans continue to cycle in and out of jobs, you have to take a look at what the environment was.

Sometimes it didn't work out for various reasons, but sometimes it is based on the environment or some of these other softer skills that we don't necessarily think of reasons why people don't stay or leave jobs quickly into the process.

And we all have had veterans who cycle in and out of jobs rapidly at the beginning. So, I urge you all to think about, specifically, if there was a job in the past that a veteran did feel was successful. And that can mean they lasted for one month or three months. Success is defined by the veteran of where he or she or they felt good in a position or what they liked about a particular job.

It might not be up to what our standards are, but, really, every job experience is an opportunity for us to really get to know who the veteran is and know what potentially could work or not work for them moving forward into new jobs. Next slide, please. Tools. Support your connection with a veteran.

Even filling out paperwork together is an opportunity to build a relationship. Again, are you being honest? Are you being open? Are you not being judgmental? Are you avoiding overwhelming the veteran? Lengthy assessments at an intake or, you know, assessment process that goes on for hours and hours at a time might not be the best match for a veteran.

And as the eyes start to gloss over and you start to lose people, it might be time to continue that assessment process later on. Or is it the environment that you're conducting the assessment? Again, we know that this as an ongoing evolving process, but never place the process ahead of the person.

So, if it feels like a task, if it feels like to the veteran that he or she or they are becoming anxious and overwhelmed, take a step back and look at where you can pull back some of this information. The next slide, what the assessment process can provide. Again, clarifying results of formal assessments a lot of you have probably conducted.

If you've been in the field for a while, you've conducted some more formal assessments, personality, interest inventories, skills-based inventories, more these paper-pencil checklists and sheets.

And those are all useful tools. But how are you clarifying the results with information and put it to real-life practice? So, in other words, if you're filling out an interest inventory with an individual just to get a better sense of what they like, what they don't like, how is that information that you're getting from

this assessment being used to then identify potential jobs or potential training or move forward in your relationship, in your process with this veteran so it's not just checking off the box and asking the questions?

So, how do you spark in-depth and informal conversations about working in careers, interests, ambitions? And you don't want to undermine a trusting relationship with the veterans that you're serving. So, again, be mindful of these steps when you're thinking about what the assessment process can do. And on the next slide, it's what the assessment process is not.

We're not looking to exclude veterans. We're not looking to set this up as a test. And we're not looking for this to be a process for which a veteran must prove their merit to you. Again, forming a relationship dialogue, getting to know the veteran is all part of the assessment process that will hopefully lend to a good job match moving forward.

And the next slide just gives some examples of some planning tools and assessments that you can check out. And my last slide before I turn it over to Ade is... And then perhaps, Ade, before you start, maybe we can just take some time for any questions or comments.

I'd love to hear what folks are doing now in terms of their assessments within your agencies, if at all. We don't need the formal tools to learn about the veterans. We can just ask them. So, here are some examples as I've mentioned a few throughout this piece thus far, some specific questions about what you can ask. What about your current situation? Are you most anxious to change?

Right? People are comfortable with their environments, right? We see this oftentimes with veterans who are not interested in returning to housing and not necessarily returning to employment. Folks are comfortable. And because it's an environment that they know and that it's comfortable, and that they, you know, are familiar with.

So, asking these types of situation, these questions about their situations, about what they don't want to change, what they do want to change, and really using that. And, Ade, as he gets into case management overview, he'll talk a little bit more about this. So, that is my piece for now. Any questions or comments before we jump over to the next section? I'd love to hear, again, if anybody wants to talk about what types of assessments you're using or what types of questions you're asking on assessments.

Anything you guys would like to share? Okay. Hearing none.

Then please, again, if you have any comments or questions, I went through a whole lot of slides in a short amount of time, please feel free to drop them in the chat. And for now, I'll turn it over to you, Ade. Thanks.

- [Ade] Hello, everyone. Good morning. Good afternoon. Greetings wherever you are in the United States of America. My name is Ade Adeniji. I'm with MSG. I'm one of the knowledge managers on this contract.

And my colleague displayed the contact slide earlier, which we're going to also display at the end of this presentation so that you all can get our contacts in case you need to reach out to us. So, I will be taking you through the slides for case management and IEPs. Next slide.

As we all know, case management is a collaborative process that assesses plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates the options and services required to meet the individual's need, but are specific to HVRP. Case management is the coordinated process to help veterans access services, address barriers, and achieve employment goals.

And as Nicole mentioned earlier, case management is built on a foundation of trust. This is not something that is attained during the first meeting. It could be a couple of meetings. It takes time for the veteran to feel trust, you know, for the case manager. It is the case manager's duty to make sure that the veteran is comfortable and, you know, feel free to express themselves and address whatever challenges that they're going through.

Case management is informed and integrated with assessment. Assessment is not a one-time thing. It's something that is ongoing. And as you meet with a veteran, you get to learn more about them. As a matter of fact, the veteran also gets to know more about the case manager.

We need to also make sure that the veteran feels that or understands the fact that this case management and assessment is all about them. And the role of the case manager is to make sure that they support the veteran. We're empowering the veteran during this process. We're putting the veteran in the driver's seat.

We all just have to guide the veteran toward achieving the goal that they set out to achieve. Next slide. Next slide, please. Okay. Case management strategies. Motivational interviewing.

[inaudible] techniques is understanding where a veteran is. Nicole mentioned earlier that we need to kind of meet the veteran where they are through their stages of change. This helps the case manager to determine how to engage and what strategies to use to determine if the veteran is ready to talk about work or employment for that matter.

It is the case manager's duty to find out is the veteran at the pre-contemplation stage. This is when, you know, the veteran is not even thinking about making any change. We need to find out if they are at the contemplation stage where they are beginning to consider making a change but are not necessarily ready yet to make a commitment.

At the preparation stage when they are preparing to, you know, make an action or to change in the foreseeable future, it is the duty of the case manager to [inaudible] and find out all these information from the veteran and meet with veterans. We also need to find out if the veteran is at the stage where they're ready to, you know, put things into action, where they are actively implementing a plan for change.

And if that is the case, you need to help them through this process to make sure that the action that they're taking is aligned with the goals that they have set at the beginning of the process. We also need to find out if they're at the maintenance level where you continue to support them to keep on making the right decisions that they're making all through the process.

Next slide, please. Individual employment plans. In case management, if case management is the journey, then the individual employment plan is the map. Goal planning is a fundamental part of case management.

Case managers help veterans to set goals that are expressed positively, goals that are focused, realistic, and achievable. Also, we need to be able to measure the goals that are set with the veterans. And goals should be easily understood by the veteran so that nothing is complicated. It is important to note that setting goals trigger new behaviors.

It will guide the veteran to focus and helps to sustain momentum in life. Goals also help align veteran's focus and promote a sense of self-mastery. While setting the goals, the veteran gets a chance to even know themselves better.

In the end, it is not possible to manage a goal that is not measured. So, while the goal-setting process is going on, we need to make sure that the veteran gives their input and they are carried along every step of the way. Customizing for each veteran. It is important for the goal to be focused on the veteran.

I mentioned earlier, we want to put them in the driver's seat. So, developing a collaborative but driven by the veteran. Those are the kinds of goals we want to be setting with the veterans so that they have a choice in what direction they want to go. Next slide. A word of caution. And I think we've mentioned this a few times during this presentation.

Achieving employment goals often requires significant change. It is the duty of the case manager to find out where the veteran is, and if they are ready for a change, hold their hand, guide them through this process of change. The IEP is a flexible living document.

This means that some goals that are set in the IEP might be updated a few days after they were set. As a matter of fact, some goals might be revised. And some goals can be put on pause depending on what the veteran is ready for and where the veteran is. The misconception is that, you know, goals and detours will happen and it's a bad thing for the veteran.

That is not necessarily the case. When goals are changed, when goals are revised, when goals are updated, it is just to make sure that the veteran is heading in the right direction. So, there needs to be a lot of patience and persistence, not only on the part of the veteran but also on the part of the case manager. My next and final slide.

Let us remember, there's more than one way to get from hope to success. The role of the case manager could be likened to that of a GPS. The GPS guides the veteran to where they are going. And as we all know, there are times the GPS would give you other options.

Maybe there's a block, there's a traffic on the route. The GPS gives an option for the veteran to take another direction. Let us bear in mind, that is exactly what case management is. That is exactly what the IEP is all about.

Change does come about in planning for veteran's success. So, at the end of the day, patience, understanding, and trust are the keywords to watch when case management is being conducted with a veteran.

Are there any questions before I proceed to the next slide and turn it over to Nicole if we have any questions about case management? Okay. There are none.

Nicole, I'll turn it over to you.

- Thanks, Ade. One thing I will say about case management, in addition to what Ade just presented, you know, oftentimes, for folks, if you can drop in the chatbox, if you are familiar or just raise your hand next to your icon letting us know if you are familiar with the stages of change, and various engagement strategies when you're working with your job seeker, specifically using the stages of change to address where individuals are in their job-seeking process.

So, if that is something that you are or are not familiar with and would like more information or more in-depth information, I know I did give an overview of case management including the stages of change and different motivational interviewing techniques and practices. NVTAC has a ton of resources and information that we can provide to you around these engagement strategies using these principles.

And really, honing in on what stage... How do I know what stage the veteran is in? And am I providing the right tools for this individual? So, for example, if I'm a precontemplator and I have no interest in going back to work, but somebody down the block told me that I can come to your agency and get a bus pass if, you know, showed up at your door, and I hope some of you are nodding your head in understanding that, you know, people are coming to you because they're hearing, you know, within the community what you may or may not be offering, etc.

So, how do we, as case managers, engage the veteran based on the stage of where they are at that moment? And it doesn't mean that they won't move through different stages, and different techniques and tools won't be shared with and used with the veteran in your planning. And this is part of the assessment as well in case management.

But if there's anyone who's interested in more information about engagement strategies using the stages of change or motivational interviewing, please feel free to reach out to us. We'd be happy to share more information with you.

- And Nicole, I just want to mention that we're going to put a link into the chatbox just for templates. For example, a template for IEP for people to download in case they just want to look at that and compare it with what they have and see if that would add any value to what the good work they already do.

- Great. Thank you. And I saw that there was a question in the chat about different examples of assessments. If folks are willing to share the tools that they're using with, please feel free to email them to our general mailbox at NVTAC... @nvtac.org.

Oh, I'm sorry, contact@nvtac.org. And we could disseminate that to all the participants and put them up on our websites too. We really want this class to be a collaborative opportunity of resource sharing in addition to us providing this information and this opportunity for you guys to network and share resources with each other would be super helpful as well.

So, let's talk a little bit about barriers to careers and addressing barriers to careers. So, again, on the next slide, I started to talk about some of these challenges or barriers that what impacts someone from maintaining or sustaining a job. So, oftentimes, we have veterans who are very well equipped at getting a job, right?

You have veterans on your caseload who, I'm sure, can go out tomorrow and get a job or you find a position for them and they're placed and within a week they're gone. And two weeks later, they're in a new job, and then they're off to the races with that one as well. Again, as I mentioned earlier, some of the assessment pieces and learning what... The goal is, how can we capture that veteran after he or she leaves that position after a week or doesn't even show up for the job interview or show up for the first day?

I've had many folks on my caseload that have done that as well. How do we use that information if we're able to stay connected with a veteran to talk about, you know, what types of barriers? And without using the word barrier, of course, but we understand that, you know, based on what's listed up on this slide, the social piece is something that we oftentimes overlook as a barrier to maintaining employment.

We talked a little bit earlier about some of the others on here in child care or substance abuse or history of incarceration or housing instability. So, all of

these examples are up here to provide you with an awareness that they may impact the veteran's ability to not only, again, get the job, but hold on to the job.

So, someone who is, you know, gung ho and ready to go back to work, but doesn't necessarily think about the transportation, the childcare, you know, any of the barriers that they may be disclosing. And that also includes impact on someone's benefits.

If you guys are working with veterans who receive different types of social security benefits or different VA benefits, that employment may impact that. Those barriers need to be addressed upfront as much as possible. And really, you know, there's many, many benefits for working. And how do you, as a case manager, discuss and realistically talk about what those benefits are.

But by us avoiding the impact of someone's housing voucher or someone's benefits, it's not going to provide you or the veteran with that holistic approach and that view that we talked about earlier. And the next slide after we talk about what some of the examples of the barriers are, here's what's, of course, some of the impacts are of these barriers, right?

So, if we think about someone's housing instability or prolonged experience of poverty or homelessness, so the inability to connect with certain individuals or discomfort in certain environments, right, the impact of if I have PTSD or if I've experienced trauma on past work sites or in my personal life, the environment of which I'm working in is going to be impacted by some of these barriers.

So, it is way more... Your job is way more than to find a job for the veteran. It's how to identify what the right job is with understanding where these barriers exist and how they could impact someone's career, including the schedules and their self-esteem and difficulty engaging with staff or co-workers.

So, be mindful of these barriers as you guys are doing your assessment, as you're doing your... as you're meeting with them and providing case management and connecting and building a relationship. Really taking a look at how these barriers and the impact of these barriers impact the type of employment environment that the veteran may or may not want to work in.

Next slide, please. So, I'm begging you... I will come on camera again if I have to. I'm begging you, please, come off mute. Talk to us about barriers to career

development that you have experienced with the veterans. So, what type of challenges?

What types of barriers? I know there must be a few out there because if there weren't, then we would have, you know, no problems with not only enrollment, but placement numbers and retention numbers and all the good stuff that our friends at DOL asked for in serving folks through this grant. So, we'd love to hear from you all now.

Either raise your hand, what have we missed? Is there specific questions you guys have around barriers or anything we've talked about so far? We'd love to hear from you.

- [Cori] Nicole, I'm sure you're seeing the list coming in on the side here, but we do have a lot of great ones. I'll read off some and then let you respond.

- Thanks, Cori.

- Of course, we have folks' lack of technological skills and experience. We have folks in rural areas who have transportation challenges. Of course, that's not just rural, I'm sure folks in urban areas are saying, "Wait, wait. We've got that too." We've got vaccine hesitancy is certainly one. Undiagnosed mental health concerns.

Felony convictions. Apprenticeship availability, which is interesting. And a couple other things here. And here's one which we know is a big thing that's actually two sides to it. A lack of motivation or we might even say sort of a perceived lack of motivation or what comes off as a lack of motivation in the process.

- Right. Thank you, Cori. Let's start with that one. Can anyone address or share examples of what tools you have all used to address this perceived lack of motivation? What has worked for you? When a veteran doesn't appear motivated or is not showing up for appointments or not showing up for interviews or isn't as engaged with you as you had hoped, what types of case management strategies have you all used with that individual to address their level of motivation?

- While that is being addressed, Nicole, someone also has a verbal question when you're done with addressing this.

- My computer is so messed up right now. I can't see or get anybody off of mute. So, I'll rely on you guys to do that. I can't touch... I'm afraid if I touch my screen, I'm going to get disconnected.

- Sure. How about we address the verbal question now if that's okay with you, Rita?

- [Rita] Of course. Your line is unmuted. Please go ahead.

- [David] Hi. Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is David Smith. I am with The Warrior Alliance located here in Atlanta. But I have previous experience in working in the VA as a peer specialist. And I think a lot of the successes that I've had with veterans going through or facing these barriers is communicating with lived experience.

It's a model for other veterans to attach themselves to as far as motivating themselves, that they can see someone who's actually been through what they've been through and come out on top, so to speak, if that makes any sense.

- Absolutely. I love the peer model. Thank you for sharing what you did. The opportunity for any program to have any veterans who have utilized your services that have been through what they are in to come back or to connect with in this peer relationship is invaluable.

I can't say enough about it. So, thank you. That's a great resource and motivator.

- One more question, Nicole. Someone said in here, Justin, that sometimes the veterans have a feeling that they cannot do better, and that sometimes get in the way of, you know, succeeding, gets in the way of moving forward. Do we have any thoughts to help with that?

I mean, I would say that this is not uncommon. And I know we mentioned during the presentation, the veteran has to be empowered. There's no cookie-cutter approach to anything. Empower them, put them in the driver's seat. Let them know that you're there to support them in whatever way because people are dealing with all kinds of...

It could be low self-esteem, it could be feelings of doubt. And that's one of the ways that I think we could help them with that. Nicole, over to you.

- Yeah. Thank you. I agree. I would love to hear from others. It certainly sounds like a self-esteem-ish... challenge with self-esteem. Again, a lot of motivational
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interviewing techniques address this and focusing on, you know, different parts of where the individual has felt success in their life.

And it may have been a long time ago. So, tapping into that may be a challenge for folks. I would love to hear from others how you're working with veterans to potentially have low self-esteem or identify, you know, that as a barrier. What strategies have you guys used in the field? You can drop your answers in the chatbox or come off mute to share.

- Nicole, John makes a really good point. And I'll just quote what he wrote here because I think it's great. "I don't think there's a short answer regarding lack of motivation. You have to have an ongoing conversation using motivational interviewing." Sorry. Just jumped a second. Give me one second.

"Figure out their rationale beyond the lack of motivation. Is it related to PTSD or mental health or anxiety or depression, lack of self-esteem? Being perfectly honest, sometimes it can come off as just laziness. At that point, you have to have an upfront honest conversation about what solution there is that you can engage beyond just getting back to work."

And there was another comment earlier, and I'm not going to try and quote it because it happened a while ago and they keep scrolling up. But someone mentioned this idea that often in these conversations, they feel like they don't know where the line is between motivating someone and actually becoming kind of a crutch, so, kind of entering into the relationship in a way that's not going to help them in a sustainable way that's only helping them in the short term.

So, a lot of different really interesting thoughts that I think just kind of cross how complex and how in-depth so much of this stuff is, so many of these ideas that you folks are talking about today.

- Yeah. Thank you. Yep. I remember one of my mentors a long time ago said to me, one of the ways that you can know the difference if you're helping or if you're enabling is if you teach someone how to do something or if it's a skill deficit that they're unable to grasp and you're demonstrating how to do it with the individual, that if you have to continue to repeatedly do it or you're doing it for the individual, then it just sort of crosses the line into enabling, right?

If someone is not showing up for interviews, and this is a hard line because you're all working to establish relationships with employers in your communities, you know, with job markets, hopefully, opening back up and more opportunities for jobs, you know, you want to preserve the relationship with your employer, but at the same time, you can't show up for work for that individual if he or she is not going to be there or...

It's that fine line between, again, what you're teaching the veteran to do, and not being punitive. Right? If someone is missing a job interview, I know my first reaction was always like, "Ugh, I really want to send you out for another job. It took me three months to get this relationship with the employer. Now I'm going to, you know, do this again with another employer. No, thank you."

And instead taking a step back and, again, addressing what you guys are talking about. Is it self-esteem? What stage of change is the individual in? What motivational interviewing techniques can I use to engage that veteran so I may not be setting myself up and that veteran up to do this again in this failed...this learned response if the veteran doesn't want to displease you or they are thinking that, you know, they have to answer a question a certain way, it becomes a barrier for us.

And Cori, like what you mentioned in red, I feel like a lot of that is super helpful in terms of taking a step back and seeing what our role is with this veteran and what... If we're crossing that line and doing too much and the veteran isn't meeting us halfway and participating and engaging and understanding what they need to do moving forward for the sustainability piece, that's not something that, you know, we, as social service providers can do.

And it's really, really hard. So, I know for all the newbies out there who are new to the field and new as, you know, your job as case manager, it's... Don't beat yourself up. It's really a learned experience to understand, you know, how much you're supposed to be doing with and for the veteran.

So, keep asking those questions. Thanks.

- [Cindy] Nicole, this is Cindy. I was just going to say I think some of this goes back to the conversation that both Nicole and Ade were having earlier around this whole assessment process and taking your time to get to know the veteran and where they are. And also specifically, when you're talking about the IEP, it's that balance between the veteran who... I know someone had put in there

that a lot of the veterans they serve are broken and they don't have the self-esteem.

They've experienced homeless for a long time and they're all of these things. So, they might not be ready to create an IEP on their own on day one, but you shouldn't create an IEP for them on day one if they're not ready to create their own IEP. Their beginning IEP might be something simple about... It might be very simple, that is, them showing up to the next four case management meetings on time.

That might be the start of the IEP that they can take ownership of, they can participate in as opposed to you saying, "Well, he's not ready to create this on his own, but I've got this employer that I know would hire him, that I know he's got the skills for that job," and you sort of moving full-on through the process and that veteran is not ready yet. And that is really hard to find that line, especially when you have the pressure of meeting goals.

So, don't beat yourselves up about it when you have those mistakes and those things happen, but try to be more conscious of it. And a lot of the comments are in that vein of trying to sort of find that balance and understanding that different veterans are going to be in different places. And you want to help them and so you're...

Many of us do this work because we want to help people. And so we have the opportunity to help them and we think we're helping them if we place them in the job because that's what the program is about. But if they're not ready for it, it's not helping them, it may hurt them more in the long run because it's one more failure if they are already suffering from lower self-esteem.

And it also hurts other veterans who might not be able to have that opportunity if that relationship with the employer is sort of destroyed. So, just try to keep that in mind as well.

- Thanks, Cindy. Absolutely.

- A quick time check, Nicole. We have about 17 minutes to go. And I think what Cindy explained answers Jennifer's question in the chat here saying that too much hand-holding doesn't encourage veterans to move forward. John also, you know, kind of addresses that. There's no short answer.

There's no short answer to how to address things like that. It's an ongoing conversation, ongoing meeting. So, finding out where the veteran is, if they're ready to engage if they're ready to, you know, set goals and so forth. So, I just wanted to mention that. The chatbox is really lighting up with questions and answers here.

So, I wanted you to know.

- Good. Thank you. Okay, awesome. Well, keep it coming in and we can go to the next slide. Okay. So, again, this is a lot of what we've talked about, how we identify, how we respond to, and how we manage barriers. Again, as with all aspects of service delivery, deciding what specifically is a barrier, what that response is, what our response is to that barrier, but it is ultimately up to the veteran too as this very busy graphic details the decision-making, the confusion, the knowledge, the choices.

So, I actually think that an exercise like creating this kind of visual board. I've used that technique with veterans who are experiencing self-esteem. It's just sort of... And on a personal level with my daughter who has major anxiety, I will have her sit down and write different, you know, circles of everything that's causing anxiety or everything that I'm feeling, you know, in our case, everything that a veteran is potentially feeling about going back to work or any fear or any hesitancy or any...

Writing it all down. And then how does the veteran respond to it? Again, going back to motivational interviewing and going back to some of our responses. What do we do with this information? So, now that, you know, a veteran is... If he or she can even identify. Some may not be able to, some may have no idea why they didn't go to or they're not aware of how to talk about why they didn't show up for work or why they left a job after one week.

But really sitting with a veteran and getting that veteran to really talk specifically about what they think some of the fear is and where some of those challenges are coming from, is super helpful. If you go to the next slide.

Again, some of our responses also include, as someone mentioned, thank you, again, our peer mentors and connecting with peer supports, and equipment, and technology. If someone doesn't have effective transportation, this is a barrier. So, what do you guys do?

Is there an opportunity for ride shares with the company? I know many HVRP programs around the country have had conversations with employers to help solve the transportation challenge. We often think of like bus routes, which are important and, you know, some have Uber and Lyfts and some have, you know, shared carpools. But what's the employer's role in that as well because they're looking for good solid employees?

And sometimes in, again, more rural and other areas where folks can't get there, what are they doing to address some of these challenges? Support from your partner organizations. When we are responding to some of these barriers, they're outside of the veteran, right? So, we have the veteran's barriers and challenges, sort of this internal intrinsic thing, and then we have these external things like, you know, barriers around transportation or what could support organizations in your community provide training or counseling or, again, the time taken to build trust and engagement and having flexibility in schedules while you're talking to employers.

These are some responses to some of the perceived barriers and what the individual's roles are. If you can go to the next slide. I like this quote by Carl Rogers. "We think we listen, but very rarely do we listen with real understanding. So, true empathy, yet listening of this very special kind is one of the most potent forces for change that we know."

So, understanding and truly listening to what the veteran is and isn't saying is part of our case manager hat. It's part of how we address barriers. Again, that's not to say that you won't be frustrated and shouldn't feel and express frustration. We hope that you guys are meeting within your organization as a team and addressing some of these challenges and barriers and getting support from each other.

That is extremely important in our field. We have high turnover rates and we have high burnout rates. And part of it is because we are putting this pressure on ourselves to these expectations that for us as providers may or not be realistic, as Cindy mentioned, you know, being driven by programmatic goals, being driven by the reality of the grant that we're working under.

And this is all important and all necessary. However, getting the right support and taking care of ourselves and being able to provide to the veteran the supports that they need based on where they are is really going to help with

identifying what our strengths are as well and what our own weaknesses are. So, that is the end of our formal presentation.

Please continue to ask questions. You'll see on the next couple of slides all of our contact information, how to reach us via email. Again, you can always... Again, we encourage you to share your assessment resources and we will put them up on our NVTAC website, contact@nvtac.org.

Am I saying that right, Cori? Am I getting that... Somebody want to put that in the chatbox if that's the right email address where folks can send different samples of forms. We will be happy to compile them and get them up for everybody.

- Yes. And that is contact@nvtac.org. So, you got it exactly right, Nicole.

- Thank you. Thanks, Cori. Any other questions or comments, thoughts for our topics today? Okay. If there's nothing else we missed from the chat or if no one else has any comments or questions, we'll certainly be happy to give you back a few minutes of your afternoon.

Thank you again very much for participating and for the ongoing dialogue that we hope to continue to have with you all. Welcome to all the new case managers and staff at your HVRP programs. We look forward to connecting with you guys. Thank you.

Ade, do you have any last-minute thoughts or comments you want...?

- No. It's all good.

- Okay.

- Everything has been covered. Thank you.

- Okay, awesome.

- Thank you, everyone.

- Thanks for joining today. We'll see you all on Monday. And Happy Veterans Day and thank you to those who have served.