



Outreach Strategies by Population Experiencing Homelessness

Virtual Learning Series

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Today's Speaker



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NVTAC Role (1 of 2)

- Provide technical assistance designed to increase grantees' ability to establish and operate successful HVRP grants
- Support HVRP grantees throughout their period of performance to ensure that challenges are resolved quickly
- Provide effective training and peer to peer learning opportunities that result in increased knowledge and adoption of innovative practices among HVRP programs nationwide

NVTAC Role (2 of 2)

- Provide technical expertise to Federal staff to assist in policy development in support of program oversight and strategic planning for the future of HVRP
- Quantify grantees' customer satisfaction, and share promising practices and lessons learned

Today's Session

- Highlighting underserved veteran communities
- Outreach strategy by population
 - LGBTQ+
 - Native American
 - Involvement with the Justice System

Highlighting Underserved Veteran Communities



Experiencing Homelessness

According to the 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress:

- Over 37,000 veterans are experiencing homelessness
- Over nine percent of adults experiencing homelessness are estimated to be veterans
- Veterans are 50 percent more likely to become homeless than other Americans due to poverty, lack of support networks, and dismal living conditions

Causes of Homelessness

- Common barriers individuals experiencing homelessness may face
 - Lack of affordable housing
 - Substance abuse
 - Mental Illness
 - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Unemployment
- Greatest risk factors for homelessness include lack of support and social isolation after discharge

Why Does This Population Matter

Underserved veteran communities:

- Face higher **barriers to employment**
- Are more likely to feel at **risk of discrimination**
- **Less likely** to seek or receive help or support from community programs

Cultural Competence

According to a 2012 Pew Research Center Study:

- 84% of veterans say that Americans don't understand them
- 71% of Americans say they have little or no understanding of veterans

Cultural Affects

- Our environment can shape how we think and how we act
 - Customs and traditions
 - Achievements
 - Social groups
- Culture can also shape our perception of the world around us
- Value of self-reflection/awareness

Maximize Cultural Competence

- Process of learning, self-examination, and refinement of our own awareness, knowledge, behavior, and attitude
 - Core knowledge of other groups
 - Recognition of the limitations of our own cultural knowledge
 - Cognizant of language problems and communication styles
 - Cultural manifestations of distress, values, and power relationships
- Training can be developed and implemented to create understanding
- Improve healthcare and social service delivery
- Decrease disparities

Outreach Strategy by Population: LGBTQ+



LGBTQ+ (1 of 5)

- Loosely defined grouping of lesbian, gay, transgender, and other queer individuals united by a common culture and social movement
 - Acronym for diverse groups of sexual and gender minorities, with similar experiences of social stigma, victimization, and discrimination
 - Lesbian, gay, and bisexual groups related by sexual orientation
 - Transgender groups related by gender identity
 - Gender non-conforming
- Diverse in political affiliation
- 7.1% of the population identify as LGBTQ+ (Gallup 2020)



LGBTQ+ (2 of 5)

- An estimated 1 million veterans identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or beyond (LGBTQ+)
- Outreach can be particularly difficult given previous policies preventing service members identifying as LGBTQ+ from serving openly in the military
 - Don't Ask Don't Tell

LGBTQ+ (3 of 5)

- Rethink your approach for outreach to the LGBTQ+ veteran community
- Establish supportive policies for LGBTQ+ veterans
- Network with local organizations focusing on services and support for individuals identifying as LGBTQ+
- Train staff and provide resources
- Share success stories

LGBTQ+ (4 of 5)

- You can have the very best outreach practices, but they will only be sustainable if you can provide quality services that meet the needs of veterans in underserved communities
- Identify barriers to serving individual veterans in underserved communities
 - Are you using language that is familiar?
 - Are you offering relevant services and support?
 - Do program staff have experience working with underserved communities?

LGBTQ+ (5 of 5)

- Each VA facility has an LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator (VCC)
 - Advocate for the right to quality care
 - Handle complaints or concerns about care
 - Help LGBTQ+ veterans get started with services
 - See the [LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator Locator](#)

- VA provides healthcare and other services to LGBTQ+ veterans
 - Hormone therapy
 - Substance use/alcohol treatment
 - Suicide prevention programs
 - Treatment and prevention of sexually transmitted infections/PrEP
 - Intimate partner violence reduction and treatment of after-effects
 - Tobacco Treatment

Tips for Inclusion

- Add pronouns to your email correspondence, social media profiles printed materials to demonstrate you have an inclusive culture
 - Clearly state pronouns: she/he, he/him, they/them, she/they or he/they
 - Ask clients how they identify themselves (pronouns)
- Don't assume that your perception of someone's gender identity is correct

Did you know about the veterans' support services a VCC can provide?

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Outreach Strategy by Population: Native American



Native American (1 of 5)

- Also known as American Indian, First Americans, and/or Indigenous Americans
- Native Americans are not monolithic
- 574 federally recognized tribes living within the U.S. and 326 Indian reservations across the U.S.
- In some western states reservations are called Rancherias, Pueblos or Indian Colonies
 - [List of Indian Reservations in the U.S.](#)
- Not all tribes live on reservations

Native American (2 of 5)

- In 2009 Congress mandated the Secretary of Labor submit a report assessing employment needs of Native American veterans living on tribal lands
- The report offered the following recommendations:
 - Boost economic development on tribal lands
 - Collaborate across Federal and State agencies with tribal governments
 - Launch a communications program focused on outreach to Native American veterans on tribal lands

Native American (2 of 5 cont.)

- Map inventoried employment needs of Native American veterans against existing programs and services
- Create an advisory committee subgroup to institutionalize an increased focus on Native American veteran employment issues
- Allow for flexibility in existing employment programs to better meet the needs of Native American veterans



Native American (3 of 5)

- Over 150,000 veterans identify as American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN)
- According to 2020 Census data, Veterans identifying as AIAN have lower incomes, lower educational attainment, and higher unemployment than other veterans
- Veterans identifying as AIAN are also more likely to lack health insurance and to have a disability, service-connected or otherwise, than other veterans

Native American (4 of 5)

- VETS encourages potential service providers for homeless AIAN veterans to apply for HVRP grants
- Review your organization's process towards outreach, marketing material, and policies for inclusivity
- Familiarize yourself with AIAN health needs, housing conditions, and tribal relationships
- Set and meet ambitious short and long-term goals
- Increase connections to employment

Native American (5 of 5)

- VA consults with AIAN tribal governments to develop partnerships
- Native Americans are eligible for a wide-variety of benefits available to all U.S. military veterans
- In addition to these benefits VA helps eligible Native Americans finance the purchase of a home

Tips for Inclusion (Native American)

- Collaborate with Tribal Employment Rights Organizations (TEROs)
 - Use education and partnering principles to create mutually beneficial relationships
 - Invaluable resource for contractors seeking skilled applicants
- Request a subject matter expert to conduct sensitivity training
 - Invite a local tribal representative to conduct sensitivity training
- Engage tribal stakeholders for recruitment
 - Tribal leaders can be an advocate for your program
 - Ask to join you as ambassadors at community engagement events
- Connect with local Tribal HUD-VASH program

Is there a reservation that you or someone in your organization is working with to build a community partnership?

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Outreach Strategy by Population: Involvement in the Justice System

Did you know?

The term justice-involved veterans is used to describe former service members who have been detained by or are under the supervision of the criminal justice system. Their involvement can range from arrest, to court involvement, to incarceration in jail or prison.



Involvement with the Justice System (1 of 5)



- As of 2018, over half of justice-involved veterans experience mental health problems or substance abuse disorders
- In 2016, over 100,000 veterans were estimated to be serving time in state or federal prison
 - Vast majority identify as male
 - Vast majority in state prison
 - About half identify as White
 - About a quarter identify as Black
 - About 10 percent identify as Hispanic

Involvement with the Justice System (2 of 5)

- Incarceration occurs for a number of reasons including police contact due to homelessness and mental health crisis
- Many veterans are caught in a cycle of contact with the criminal justice system
- Involvement in the criminal justice system may be a risk factor for homelessness and/or a consequence of homelessness

Involvement with the Justice System (3 of 5)

- Outreach to incarcerated or transitioning veterans can be a difficult and challenging effort
- Partner with organizations that are *not* in conventional services, such as:
 - Corrections departments to prevent the homelessness of veterans re-entering the community
 - Law enforcement to divert veterans from jail
 - Courts to advance alternatives to incarceration
- Criminal history does not prevent successful employment or housing outcomes

Involvement with the Justice System (4 of 5)

- Share information with community partners to connect veterans needing assistance regardless of their circumstances
- Remove as many barriers to housing and other supportive services as possible
 - Locate and identify veterans experiencing homelessness
 - Create and share a community-wide list of veterans
 - Engage and support private landlords as partners
- Always promote employment as a doable outcome and engage all partners in work talk

Involvement with the Justice System (5 of 5)

- VA's Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) Program is a prevention-focused component of VA's Homeless Programs Office
- VJO specialists provide outreach services to justice-involved veterans in various settings including jails and courts
- VJO's serve in Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs) and other veteran focused court programs

Tips for Inclusion (Justice System)

- Collaborate with Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) to provide a system of service
- Use a trauma-informed approach to understand the needs of justice-involved veterans
- Partner with a Health Care for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Program specialist for veterans re-entering the community
 - Outreach and pre-release assessments services for Veterans in prison
 - Referrals and linkages to medical, mental health and social services, including employment services on release
 - Short-term case management assistance on release

Have you or a member of your organization worked with a VJO and/or VTC?

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Questions?

Thank you!

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