

## Assessment and Intake Virtual Learning Course (VLC) Transcript

- [Jenn Steigerwald]: Thank you for joining us. We're going to give it about four or so minutes just to let everybody who's in the waiting room join us, and then we'll go ahead and get started. As you all are joining, we're waiting just a couple of minutes to let people in if you wanted to comment in the chat what agency you are from, and then we'll get started in just a couple of minutes.

We'll go ahead and get started now. Thank you all for joining us today. Before we jump in, this is the first of four courses in our virtual learning series that will take place over the next two weeks. Today, we'll be talking about assessment and intake, and then in our next session, Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, we'll be talking about goal planning in case management. Our third session on October 18<sup>th</sup> will be job search and training, and then we'll finish it up on October 20<sup>th</sup> with job placement and retention.

So hopefully, you guys are all registered for all four. But, if you aren't yet, we sent out an email with links to the registration for all four sessions. And then, if you didn't get that email, we also have registration up on the main homepage of our website. You can't miss it. We hope you will join us for the rest of our series.

To get started, I'm Jenn Steigerwald, and I am one of the coaches on our NVTAC team. As you'll see on the screen, we have three coaches on our team. Sarah Chung and Steve Dudasik—you will see them also throughout the virtual learning series over the next two weeks. But the three of us together make up the coaching team. So, we do the technical assistance work with grantees and all of these trainings. So, you've probably seen all of our faces before.

Also, as a refresher, or maybe for new grantees who are not familiar with NVTAC or what our team does, NVTAC is the National Veterans Technical Assistance Center. We are responsible for providing technical assistance for grantees who receive HVRP funding throughout their entire period of performance. We do one-on-one technical assistance with grantees. We also do trainings. We do monthly community of practice events, and then twice a year, we do these more in-depth virtual learning series.

All of the information for NVTAC can be found on our website, [NVTAC.org](http://NVTAC.org), and in order to access or request technical assistance services, you can always reach out to our shared mailbox at [contact@nvtac.org](mailto:contact@nvtac.org).

If you want to reach anyone on the NVTAC team, go ahead and reach out to that email, and we will get it to the correct person.

If you haven't participated in any of our events or trainings before, we also provide peer-to-peer learning opportunities. We've been doing that by region, and we also do that on a one-on-one basis through technical assistance.

So, if you are receiving technical assistance on a topic and want to discuss it with another grantee who has overcome similar challenges, NVTAC will facilitate a one-on-one peer-to-peer learning opportunity for you and another grantee.

Also, we provide technical expertise to federal staff to assist with policy development. All of this is just in support of program oversight and strategic planning for the future of HVRP. And lastly, we quantify grantees customer satisfaction and share promising practices and lessons learned. So, that is just a small snapshot of what we do. We are open to provide technical assistance to every grantee.

If you have any questions or want to learn more, I would check out our website, and then just reach out to us at [contact@nvtac.org](mailto:contact@nvtac.org). We can answer any questions that you might have.

Also, before we jump in today, this session is being recorded. All four of our sessions will be recorded. So, if you want to revisit this session, or if maybe one of your colleagues wasn't able to attend today, you'll be able to access the slides and the recording in a couple of days.

As I mentioned, today, we're going to start by talking about assessment and intake, which is kind of the beginning point of HVRP and the services that you'll provide to veterans. It's also an extremely critical part of the process, and it is something that's not just at the beginning but something that you revisit throughout serving a veteran.

First and foremost, intake begins with an initial assessment to determine whether the individual is eligible for HVRP services and a suitable fit for the program. The actual assessment and assessment process looks very different from grantee to grantee. Each organization may have a different process, but all of them really get down to these two key points at the beginning. Is the veteran eligible for services, and are they a suitable fit for the program? Are they seeking employment? Are they interested in employment? As I mentioned at the top, assessment is the foundation for an HVRP grantee's work with each veteran they serve, each veteran experiencing homelessness. Assessment is not just one point in time. Assessment is ingrained throughout the process. It's ongoing and it's intensive. You're seeking to learn about where the veteran is and where the veteran would want to go. So, when we talk about assessment, it's not just the very beginning, the intake process. Assessment is built in throughout the process throughout the whole time that you're working with a veteran.

The goal is to get a comprehensive picture of the veteran and what they want. So, what does that mean? We want to ensure that we understand where the veteran is currently, maybe what they've experienced before in their job history, and then where they want to go. What are their goals? Where do they see themselves? What are they reaching for? Because if we don't have a good idea of all of those things, where they are now, where they've been, and where they want to go, we're not going to serve them as well as we can. We want to make sure that we're tailoring our HVRP services to the veterans' specific needs. And that's really where assessment comes in handy. It's a tool that assists us in helping to learn the veteran and to guide us along the process of providing HVRP services.

Along those lines, to guide these efforts along the assessment process, there are a couple of focus areas that can really help you.

First, we think about abilities, interests, and skills. We want to ensure we're focusing on the veteran's strengths. What kind of work does the veteran want to do? In what setting? What activities do they like? What are they good at? What experience do they have? And then one step further. Not just what experience do they have, not just what they've worked in in the past, but did they enjoy it? What parts did they enjoy? What parts of their experience Maybe what they didn't like as much. So, we want to focus on their strengths in this stage. We want to know what their interests are, and what their skills are and really start to hone in on maybe what direction we want to go.

Next, we're starting out with strengths. We're starting out with where they are, what they like, and where they want to go. But another important factor is barriers, right? So, of course, we have to discuss barriers throughout this process. Something that's extremely important. What is preventing the veteran from stable employment? This is pretty broad, and this question is pretty broad on purpose because that can look so different for every veteran, right? So, what's preventing them from stable employment? What roadblock are they facing that we can help them navigate or maybe connect them with someone who can help them navigate? This is a really important question for helping them take that next step into stable employment. These barriers can be skills based. Maybe they lack access to training, or they have lacked access to training in the past. It could be health-related, and it could be situational. They may not have reliable transportation. They may have a criminal background that has made it difficult for them to find stable employment in the past. So, depending on what those barriers look like, it helps determine where you start and what things you need to address at the very beginning. Or maybe it's a barrier where you need to make connections with other organizations, other programs, or someone else who can help a system through overcoming those barriers.

And, lastly, is support. This is an extremely critical one. What can HVRP do to support the veteran in overcoming barriers and translate their interest, abilities, and skills into a fruitful and lasting employment opportunity? That's what we're all here to do, right? We're here to support them in this process to help them navigate and help them achieve and maintain stable employment. What supports do they need in order to do that? Whether that's support from the HVRP program, support from the staff member that they're working within the program, or maybe that's a connection again with someone outside of the program, a community connection, someone else that we may need to bring in to provide full wraparound services to them to make sure they're supported in this process, and to make sure that they feel ready, feel prepared, feel fully supported, to achieve those career goals.

We have a few things available on the NVTAC website that we wanted to make you all aware of. If you did attend our Community of Practice event back in August, we did a website walkthrough, so this may be familiar to some of you. But to those who aren't aware of this, we have a section on the NVTAC website for customizable forms. These forms are available for all

of you to use. You don't have to use them word for word, but you can pick from things you need for your program, so you're not starting from scratch when we're talking about assessment.

This is an example of some of the customizable forms that are on there now. We have a couple for eligibility, intake, assessment, case management, some more in-depth ones about individual employment plans, case notes, policies, and different checklists. So, for anything that you feel like your program doesn't have right now, but you'd love to create, this is a great starting point. Again, even if you don't use these forms exactly, there are some great things that you can pull from them for your own assessment process. And not even just assessment but going into case management and just some different forms that you can customize for your own needs throughout the entire HVRP process. We just wanted you all to know that these are available for you. Again, if you have any questions about them, contact us at [contact@nvtac.org](mailto:contact@nvtac.org), and we can help you. Or, if you have any suggestions on something that you don't see on there, but you think would be helpful, again, you can reach out to us that way too.

- [Sarah Chung]: Jenn, we have a question about eligibility in the chat, and it's from Ron. He says, "Can we clear up eligibility or non-eligibility of Coast Guard veterans since they fall under armed forces, but not the Department of Defense members?"

- [Jenn]: That is a great question. I do not have the eligibility criteria in front of me, but I would recommend that you reach out to us via email, and we can clear it up. But also, a great resource would be asking your GOTR if you have a specific eligibility requirement that is not covered, maybe in the FOA or throughout the guidance. But I would be happy to look into that, and we can get back to you after the training today if you want to reach out to us at [contact@nvtac.org](mailto:contact@nvtac.org), and we can help you find that answer.

Any other questions before we keep going? I do not see anything at the moment. Awesome.

So next, I am so excited to introduce that we have two guest speakers today who are HVRP grantees who will be discussing some possible assessment processes and what they look like, things that have worked for them, et cetera.

First is Curry Cromer; he currently serves as the assistant director of employment and training with Veteran Services of Carolinas (VSC), and his current role provides oversight to all of VSC's employment and job training programming, including two Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program grants in the Western and Piedmont regions of North Carolina. Curry is experienced in providing direct services to veterans in HVRP, assisting veterans with work, readiness, job development, and job placement services through the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program, rapid rehousing, and homeless prevention program.

We also have Ralph Riess with us today, and he is the regional coordinator for veteran services of the Carolinas. Ralph's responsibilities include providing direct support to VSC's core employment housing service coordination and outreach programming. Prior to this role, Ralph was an HVRP outreach specialist in Chicago, Illinois, assisting communities and organizations

with identifying HVRP-eligible veterans and connecting them to employment services. Currently, Ralph works across service delivery systems in Western North Carolina to promote veterans' issues and to ensure veterans' access to services. Ralph honorably served in the United States Navy, during which time he toured in Southeast Asia, where his primary mission was to strengthen international relationships and bring POW/MIAs back home.

So, I will turn it over to Curry and Ralph.

- [Curry Comer]: Excellent; thank you for that introduction, Jenn, and great to be here with everybody today. I want to thank NVTAC for inviting us to join in this presentation. We will talk about some best practices we found in our stages of HVRP assessment.

I'm here with my colleague, Ralph Riess, who's in our Asheville office.

- [Ralph Riess]: Hey everybody, this is Ralph Riess. Thank you, Curry.

- [Curry]: Excellent, and I'm down here out of Charlotte, North Carolina. I don't have an interesting background like Ralph does, unfortunately. It is great to be here. I think anytime we can get together in these Community of Practice settings and learn from each other, it's just a win for veterans and a win for HVRP. I'm so excited to talk to you guys about some things that have been working for us in the assessment arena, and also excited about looking forward to the other learning sessions over the next two weeks.

[Next Slide]: There's just a little agenda here for you. We're going to tell you a little bit about VSC, some of our scope of service across the state of North Carolina. We will talk about some of the building blocks that have been working for us on various stages of HVRP assessment. We'll talk to you about what we do internally, discuss some best practices, and then leave some time for questions and discussion.

And so hopefully, we can get some robust discussion around this important topic of assessment, and, just a disclaimer, you know what we talk about today, it's not prescriptive. There are multiple approaches to providing assessment in this program. We're going to talk about things that are working for us, and I'm hoping to hear from you all as grantees on what's working, things that you guys have learned over time, and hopefully, share those practices with the grantees here today.

[Next Slide]: we'll turn it over to Ralph.

- [Ralph]: It's good to talk with you all, especially other HVRP providers. A little bit about our organization. These are the different grants and other services that we provide at Veteran Services of Carolinas.

First and foremost, a lot of us are already familiar with it, but we have employment and training that falls under HVRP. That's why we're all here today. We do have an opportunity to serve our veterans and our family members, and other civilian members in the community. That's a brand

new resource that we are providing that's going to help us be able to grow our employment program and be able to provide services and training moving forward. We are very excited by that.

The next thing, obviously, a lot of us that may have a connection with SSVF, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program. It's really nice to be able to partner in-house, and with that, to be able to talk to our case managers on a weekly basis so that we can get those services provided to us. But primarily, they are a rapid rehousing program. They assist in providing housing for our veterans, especially when they have a sustainable job that HVRP helps them provide.

VRQ is another program that we utilize quite a bit. It doesn't necessarily fall under Veteran Services of Carolinas, but it is one of the ministries that we work with that falls in line with ABCCM, and that is our parent ministry that VSC falls under.

VRQ is an excellent program that has roughly over one hundred and fifty beds at any given time for our veterans. It's specifically for them for rapid rehousing. Or, they have a very unique temporary employment program that allows our veterans who haven't been able to be employed for a while to find employment and gain some pretty good experience. Then it's a good correlation for our HVRP practices.

Some of our bread and butter here comes from NC Serves. This is where we capture all our referrals for VSC. A lot of us have different procedures and processes, like they mentioned before. But our NC Service takes care of those referrals and determines whether or not they'll be a good fit for HVRP, housing, or shelter; whatever it is, a lot of our candidates fall under there. So that we could determine whether they are willing or able to go back to work.

Another thing that helps us, kind of like the Spearhead of VSC, is our HOPE and PATH programs. These are our programs that operate on the ground, doing street outreach, finding our veterans in the woods, vehicles, condemned buildings, you name it. They help our veterans with mental health challenges who have no access to resources, and they get them bridged to other resources. Eventually, after about a year, or sometimes even longer, they get into SSVF or HVRP. So, it is more of a long-term approach program, but it gets those veterans who don't have any resources, gets them access to housing and everything else. So, it's very helpful for us to have that.

The last thing we have is very new to us, so pardon me for not having all the information, but it is our suicide prevention program. It is by the staff, Sergeant Fox, and it's super cool. We're going to be able to cover one hundred counties with it.

It will help our clients with mental health issues with suicide prevention. It's going to help with training across training organizations and North Carolina. It's going to be something that I think a lot of us are super excited about. One of the things I noticed is that each of these programs by

themselves helps us with HVRP and helps us get those co-enrolled veterans, especially the services needed.

- [Jenn]: Before we go to the next slide, we do have a hand raised. We can go ahead and unmute Tanya.

- [Tanya Canty]: Regarding NC Serves, is it like a 211 call center, or are you actually housed within one of these other agencies?

- [Ralph]: We have an 828 call center. That's the area code that we have here in North Carolina, especially in the western region. But we work with 211, so a lot of the 211 calls that are made get referred through Unite Us, which is the system that we utilize to document referrals. NC Serves captures a lot of the referrals through that.

- [Curry]: Yes, I can elaborate on that question for you, Tanya. So yes, our NC Serves Coordination Center is housed within our organization. They are powered by a technology platform called Unite Us. Essentially our care coordinators are able to connect veterans to a whole host of resources, and it's a referral system. It's been a very effective tool for us in serving our veterans, but also for driving referrals and connecting veterans who are in need of our services.

- [Ralph]: This is a map here of our organization. The areas that we cover for HVRP, as you can tell, we have basically all of Western North Carolina covered with one grant. The second grant, you can see where we call HVRP Piedmont, it's a lot of central North Carolina, but we cover some of the major cities like Charlotte or Asheville with this grant so that we can capture the most veterans possible.

We don't have any HVRP services on the coast, but we do provide continual employment and training services out there for our veterans that need it out there and in New Hanover and Onslow Counties.

- [Curry]: Awesome. Thanks, Ralph.

[Next Slide]: I'll talk a little bit briefly about what makes a good assessment and what are the building blocks of an effective assessment for HVRP.

The first of these is really the primary, and I know Jenn touched on this. A good assessment is going to verify eligibility and suitability for services, so ensuring that your veteran is eligible so that we are clear to provide the whole host of services that HVRP can provide.

Also, suitability, making sure that we are the right intervention for that veteran, and, based on that veteran's goals and capabilities, and making sure that we are at the right stage to provide that goal and make sure that we have a role to play. The assessment should hit on both of those items.

It should also help identify what barriers are in place currently for that veteran. Is it a lack of training? Are there transportation issues? Is there access to health care? What are some of those barriers at work?

Then also, conversely, what are the strengths? What does the veteran have currently that is an asset? What internal strengths do they have in their job history and previous training? What are those things that we can leverage, and help our veterans leverage, as they go through our services?

We also look at what the veteran's particular goals are. There are a host of ways to pull that information out, and we'll talk about some of those today.

If you have a good assessment process in place, it's going to lead to better outcomes. You're going to be able to more quickly identify what the barriers are so that we can help assist our veterans to overcome them.

We're able to help quickly identify what their employment goals are and what the resources they need are with the understanding that being able to identify that is going to lead to a better outcome. If we know that the veteran is suitable for the program, what their barriers are, that we have a role to play, and what that role is, we can then help our veteran obtain a career-level job.

It's also important to remember that no assessment is perfect. No matter how well you design your tools, you're not necessarily going to get all the information in one setting. That's why assessment is an ongoing process. It takes time to build rapport, and every veteran is going to be different on what that timetable looks like.

We like to make sure that assessment is ongoing, that we're constantly taking a look at what the goals are, and then being able to adapt our services. But ultimately, a good assessment for us is going to drive the Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) or that individualized employment plan. Our goal is that when we are through the assessment stages, the IEP is almost going to write itself because we have taken the time to explore all of the various aspects of the veteran's employment circumstances so that we can then help craft that plan toward gainful employment.

[Next Slide]: I think that's on you there, Ralph.

- [Ralph]: Yes, sir, thank you. This goes over what happens at the time when we capture that referral within our organization. We have that initial screening, and a lot of times, that's a very conversative piece between the individual on the phone and the veteran that's going through this situation. The homelessness crisis, whatever it is, we screen for everything. We don't have a wrong-door approach, but our goal is to identify which program will best fit them.

For HVRP, once we identify that they are looking for employment, or they've been out of work, and they're looking for some other services to encourage that, we set them up with an intake coordinator. Essentially, that is someone that's going to give them a robust initial intake to determine whether they're really willing and able to get back to work based on their situation.



That can be a variety of circumstances. As we said, those barriers can be an issue, but it often has something to do with Social Security Disability. If we can find that ahead of time, we don't want to go through the whole case management process and find out, "Oh, we're not really interested in getting back to work because I'm utilizing a Social Security Disability." If we can figure that out ahead of time, we can really save a lot of time at the back end.

The next piece of that is case assignment, and once the case is assigned, that gives us an opportunity to get face-to-face with a veteran. That gives us an opportunity to get in touch with this veteran. You'll need to book a time to do an enrollment, and that's where the assessment really takes place. Although we have a conversation with the veteran, and we determine their willingness and ableness to get back to work, the assessment continues because it's really up to the case manager. They determine their level of value, their level of determination to get back to work and to be able to sustain work because that's not the option every single time.

They will do a formal assessment during the HVRP enrollment. They will talk a little bit more about their eligibility, talk a little bit more about their willingness to go back and work, and see if this will be a good fit for them based on what their needs are. We will further assess their needs for employment based on the barriers they provide us and based on the situation at hand. Not everything can get covered all in one sitting. But, a lot of times, we figure things out along the way that are a little bit more helpful. We get a little more in-depth with that in the next slide.

- [Curry]: Yeah, thank you, Ralph. We'll now flesh out a little more detail for those different stages. I think it's also important just to recognize that what we're talking about today with this conversation are our internal tools that we are utilizing during our assessment process. But these do not take the place of formal career interest profilers, skill profilers, and those sorts of things. Those are also additional tools that we utilize in our process. Today, we're just talking about some of the internal tools that we utilize, so that may be a topic for a later discussion, and I would definitely be interested to hear that.

[Next Slide]: We'll talk a little bit more about our initial screening process. We have two primary objectives. When we do our initial screening, one is to assess eligibility, and two is to assess that program's suitability.

Our initial screening is a streamlined process. It's a one-pager form designed to be streamlined to create as little barrier to entry to get that process going.

A lot of times, for veterans who are trying to access a host of services, there can be a lot of hoops that they have to jump through, whether it's accessing shelter, housing interventions, or any other number of supports. By the time you get to offering employment, you can have an overwhelmed veteran who's had to do five different things. So, we try to keep it streamlined but in a way that still captures these important components.

Is the veteran eligible? Do they appear to be eligible? If you need a refresher on that eligibility, you'll want to look at the VPL, and there's a link here for that.

What is their housing status? Are they in a literal homeless situation? Have they experienced homelessness within the past sixty days? Are they participating in an SSVF, shallow subsidy, HUD-VASH, or GPD program? Are they in a shelter? Are they at risk? Are they losing their housing within one to fourteen days or fifteen to sixty days? If the veteran is in one of those statuses, then we can proceed. Then during the formal enrollment, the second component is their veteran status. Did they serve active duty one day? We have access to SQUARES, so our intake coordinators are able to pull that SQUARES information and act as a placeholder for us on that veteran eligibility while we work to get the DD-214. So that is something that does come in handy for us.

So we look at that eligibility piece, but then we shift to the suitability. Some of the questions we ask to capture and to begin painting that picture on whether or not our services seem to be suitable for the particular veteran. One way you can do that is to ask where they have applied lately. Has the veteran been putting in applications? If so, that's an indicator that they want to work. If they haven't applied, then you may have some other follow-up questions that you need to look at. How many jobs have they had in the past year? If the veteran has had five jobs in the last year, then that may give you a little bit of an inclination on someone that wants to work but they're having trouble keeping jobs. Are they going to temp jobs? Are there other challenges in place? Have they worked at all in the past year? If they haven't been working in the last year, when was the last time they had a job? Was it three years ago? Was it a year ago? Was it ten years ago? That's also something that's important. Is there a training goal that they need help with? Is there another barrier? Is it criminal background? Is it transportation? Is there something that we can do or a service that we can provide to help address that barrier? So again, just doing a really quick rundown of what the barriers are. Let's take a quick inventory. We begin to look at that more in depth when we do our formal enrollment.

Lastly, we do work interest. We ask the veteran on a scale from one to ten, "How interested are you in employment and job training?" If the veteran says a ten, but then they haven't applied to any jobs, or they haven't worked in ten years, then we have to have a deeper conversation. It's not a disqualifier, and I think that's important to know. Just because someone has been out of the workforce or whatnot for that long. But it helps give us an indication of whether our services are the right services, and it puts us on that trail to be able to ask those further questions.

That's the initial screening; we try to keep it as a streamlined process, and then once that screening takes place, we go on to our additional assessment activities.

- [Ralph]: One of the important things to ask when we get a veteran that comes to us would be who are they already working with? Do they have an SSVF case manager? Were they referred from those services? Where were they referred from? It helps us to identify, "Okay, I need a call HUD-VASH at the VA," or "I need to call their Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program (DVOP) because they were just referred to a DVOP here in our county," or "I need a call home or bound" which is another SSVF provider. And then, we can link up to their case manager and talk to them about the client that was just referred to us. This helps us with determining further eligibility because we can get a lot more information from them from pre-existing case notes that tell us a

lot more about the client and their case history. It allows us to determine how much they've been working towards sustainability and how much they have been working toward getting things right in their lives. It isn't the case for everybody, but sometimes it just helps having a little bit more information to determine their sustainability or their eligibility.

One thing that we also look at, like we've talked about, is what's missing in the documentation. That's important. For assessing missing information, that's what referring to our partners helps us out with. We may do an initial intake, but we're working with another case manager. That can help us kind of fill in the blanks from what they tell us and what they tell them. But at the end of the day, we just want to make sure that we have all the pieces so that we know this is going to be a great client for whatever work we're going to try to set them up with or training that we're going to help link them up to. Having those pieces together and having a relationship with those other community providers helps us build a stronger results-oriented program for HVRP.

So one of the things that we do as well is leveraging our community-based technology platforms like Unite Us or Combined Arms. The reason why we utilize Unite Us is because we operate in all those different counties that you notice. I think that's over 30-plus counties for us just in HVRP alone. Every single time we see a referral from a provider that comes to Unite Us, we can track that information better. We can see where the referral is coming from. We know exactly who provided the referral. We don't just get a loose email with some loose documentation. A lot of that can be lost in transition, so sometimes our conversation with providers is like, "Are you utilizing an item? And how can we help you get on board with it so that when we see a referral? We can track it better and also give you information back." So you know what's happening with your veteran that you refer to us. Leveraging that community-based technology platform is huge for us because we operate in so many counties. If it was just one county, we could probably get away with not utilizing it. But since we operate in so many different counties, so many things are going on; this helps us bring it all down to one platform so that we can track it all.

Another thing that helps us with our client success and further assessment is giving them small tasks. Are they capable of doing small things? It could be as simple as, "I need you to get some documentation from your current case manager at the shelter or with your HUD-VASH case manager so that we can get your ID because they might have it on hand." Or we might just tell them, "You need to go and get renew your license and take a class. So, I need you to make an appointment for me because I can't necessarily make that for you." So small things like that. At the end of the day, we want to make sure that they have some skin in the game. A lot of times, I would personally ask them if they could go look for some training. Find something on your smartphone. Or, if you have computer lab access at your shelter, utilize that. Tell me what you can find.

Then, I'll let you know what we have on our end as well. That way, we can give them some winning cards as they start playing with us. Another thing is how we continue to engage and build rapport. A lot of our veterans, believe it or not, especially when they're homeless, are not ready for employment. We know we have a performance-based grant, and we just have to be able to move on as a grant that's performing for a bigger purpose and say, "Hey! We've got to

move on to the next client, but we're not going to close the door on you.” So, just because you have a substance abuse problem, and you decide you had to go to the VA and take their 30-day program, and they're going to house you. They're going to take care of you for those 30 days, and basically, you're not going to be enrolling in HVRP, so we have to be able to allow you to come back to us when you're ready. That has actually happened recently with one of my clients. He's been in SSVF for about eight months, and we finally got him housing in another county, not the original county he told me, but it was another county that was actually a little bit closer to his family and also close to the VA. It worked out really well, but he understood by himself without me telling him what he needed to do. He talked to the VA, he worked with our SSVF case manager as well who helped him get linked up with the VA and their substance abuse program. For 30 days, even though he has housing identified, he's going to be taking a pause on any HVRP enrollment. So we will take on the assessment further after November, and we will further assess whether or not he really wants to be employed, and I think that's definitely the route we're going to take. But sometimes, we have to pause just so that we can continue to be successful for clients.

- [Curry]: Definitely, and just a point of emphasis there, too, because that ‘continue to engage’ piece is going to service your outcome. It's going to prevent you from getting a bad outcome from a veteran who may not be particularly ready, but by continuing to engage, you can help connect that person to resources and other interventions that are ultimately going to lead to them enrolling in the program.

We've got another client that was referred in, and right now, he just needs help with peer support, because there's a host of things that he's trying to access. We're going to connect to the personal peer support and then explore that for a few weeks before re-engaging.

The other point of emphasis is this sort of informal assessment. These are really good techniques if you have a repeat participant or repeat veterans. Not all your clients are going to be successful the first time around.

We have to be mindful of the performance and outcomes of the grant, but that doesn't mean that you can't serve the person again. By engaging with the person that referred them, you can start figuring out, “Okay, is there something different this time around that can give us hope and faith that this particular person can be successful.” Using those small assignments that Ralph mentioned is a great technique for those repeat clients and allows people to surprise you because we see repeat folks that come in and turn it around the second time.

I know we're limited on time, but we'll talk a little bit about the enrollment interview. This is what we're going to call our formal assessment. Just some highlights of our enrollment interview and our conversation for our ISP (individualized success plans), which is what we call our IEP. It's designed to be an interview, but also a conversation. First and foremost, it's a person-centered approach. We are looking at what the veteran's goals and aspirations are in relation to the services that we can provide. We're looking at the whole person. How is their financial well-being? What is their access to health care? Do they have veterans' benefits in place? Do they

need a referral for benefits? What is their housing status? Are they receiving SNAP benefits? We're looking at those different items that affect the whole person.

Our enrollment interview is designed to utilize motivational interviewing tools. All of our staff receive biannual training in motivational interviewing. We ask a host of open-ended questions so that we can begin employing those other motivational interviewing tools. We also utilize those close-ended questions. Close-ended questions can get a bad rap, but they can be very efficient in ascertaining important information. Leave plenty of room for those open-ended questions because that's where you can get some really meaningful conversation going and build rapport with your clients.

Ultimately, we're trying to take inventory and identify the barriers at work. We look at that in a variety of ways. What are those surface-level barriers? Unemployment is a barrier. Homelessness is a barrier. Transportation is a barrier. We identify those barriers at the surface, but then we look to go further from that. So, what are the real root causes? Unemployment is a symptom of something else at work, so we try to begin looking at what some of those root causes are. That's an endeavor that we're working on throughout the entire case, because, as we talked about earlier, some veterans are more forthcoming or more aware, or are more quickly trusting.

In the relationship that you're creating with and for each person, we try to identify what the root causes are and then we're looking at strength. What are the internal strengths available to our clients? What's their previous education or work history? Do they have current certifications? What was their military training or their job in the military? What are any previous certifications they've had? What resources do they have available? Do they have access to public transportation? Do they own their own vehicle? Do they have HUD-VASH in place? Do they have other housing interventions in place? What are those resources? Do they have other case managers that we can connect with? What are the resources needed? This is the role that we come in, so we say, "We know that you need referrals for X, Y, and Z. You have a service-connected disability, but you haven't filed for an increase in ten years. Let's go get you over to a VSO so that you can apply for that service connection. Let's get you with the Career Council. Let's get you with someone at the community college or whatnot."

The goal of our enrollment interview is to narrow down the IEP goals and to drive that IEP. Throughout the learning session over the next couple of weeks, they'll be talking about that case planning piece. We're really looking to answer: What are the short-term goals? What are the long-term goals? What are the barriers? What are the supports needed, and what are the strengths that our particular individual has that we can help leverage to be successful in the program? That's just kind of a snapshot of our enrollment interview, and we'd be happy to answer additional questions on that towards the end of the session.

- [Jenn]: Curry, we have a hand up. Tanya, I think we should be unmuting you now.

- [Tanya]: This question is in regard to your Unite Us platform that you had mentioned earlier. They go through a multitude of channels, whether it's intake because they're going into shelter,

intake because they are going through SSVF, HUD-VASH, et cetera. Do you guys utilize the Unite Us platform? Are you using that platform to upload documents so by the time the veteran gets to you, you'll already have the DD-214? Have you found that the Unite Us platform has become efficient in that way to utilize it in that in that manner?

- [Curry]: Absolutely, Tanya, all of those things. It's become extremely efficient in that particular case. It's allowed providers to really work together. The veteran has to provide release and authorization to have those referrals and those documents sent. They send them to our care coordination team, or they have provided them to another case manager to utilize them in the referral process. What it allows us to do is be more proactive in the services that we're providing for the veteran and doing so in a more coordinated and smart way that provides a better service.

The other advantage of it—Ralph touched on this a little bit during the informal assessment—is that you've got a history of referrals built into that platform so you can see where the person's been. Have they been referred for job search assistance before? Who's helped them? Then there are details on whether that referral was successful or not. You can kind of see some of the history that's been going on. It prevents the veteran from having to tell their story as many times as well.

- [Tanya]: Thank you.

- [Curry]: I will also say, it provides great transparency and as well as tracking for us.

When we have site visits, we want to be able to demonstrate that we have been making referrals on behalf of our clients, and we also want to be able to showcase what the outcome of those referrals has been. Unite Us helps us track that in a way that is simple for our case managers.

Got a thumbs up from Julie as well on the Unite Us, but there are other platforms to keep in mind in your states. I encourage everybody to look at those technology platforms to help you along.

[Next Slide]: we've got a few examples of some of the assessment questions that we asked to try to get below the surface. Ralph, I will turn over the first couple to you.

- [Ralph]: Some of these assessment questions come directly from our form itself, and these are helpful for our case managers to help get below the surface of the barriers a little bit and determine what their unique skill sets are and what they can help them with.

One question would be, “What comes easy for you in school or work?” So, what natural tendencies or natural abilities do they have that we can apply right away that might help them find eligible work or even some training that might be able to expand on their experience and give certified training. It could be community outreach. It could be, “When it comes to helping people, it's something that's my wheelhouse.” So, we might even think about peer support based on their background and their willingness to help another veteran. We have a lot of different things that we can link them to based on their answers in regard to what comes easily to them with work or school.

Another thing, too, “What are your most valuable skills?” Something that they've been using their whole life. Their number one skill that they use right now that's helped them with work or schooling. A lot of times, this can be the most valuable skill in their relationships with the community. It can be, “Hey, I have an IT degree right now. That's my most valuable skill. I just haven't utilized it for such and such reasons, because of substance abuse, or whatever the situation was.” Or, “I've been a chef at multiple restaurants before, but because of whatever situation, I no longer am. I would like to get back there.” Or, “Hey, I wouldn't mind starting there as a short-term goal, but I would like to build on new skills moving forward.”

Those two questions go side by side because it allows us to get a little bit deeper into what we can help them with. Like Curry said before, this helps build that IEP once we get to the next page because right after these questions, we go right over to their IEP. We want to make sure that this is something that we can work with them short-term or long-term. These two questions are pretty valuable to us. There are questions that we cluster around that area. It's not listed here, as we look at work experience, so it tells us about their favorite work experiences and tells us about their least favorite work experiences. It's just as important to find out that least favorite for that skills section that Ralph was mentioning.

I was sitting in on an intake several weeks ago, and I thought to myself, “Well, this veteran is so personable and engaging. I could see this person working on a team or in customer service, or those sorts of things.” Had I not really allowed him to dictate those things, I wouldn't have known that that's the last thing that he wanted to be doing. He does not work well with others. He does not want to be around that many people because it affects his PTSD. I could have made an assumption, but in asking those questions to get below the surface, we're able to really let the veteran be in the driver's seat and help us figure out where they want to go and how we can be a part in helping them get there.

Those first two questions are really strengths-based, so we want to know what those internal strengths and skill sets that are already available are and accentuate those.

This next question is to describe the impact that job stability will have on their long-term goals. This is a question I like to identify as, “What is your why?” Yes, we know employment. But, why? This question really helps with getting our veterans to be able to picture that long-term because, let's face it, if you're in a crisis situation, you're having unstable housing, you're experiencing homelessness, or you don't have a job, it's really hard to start connecting with that down the road because you're trying to figure out where you're going to sleep or get your next meal. It's also important to help our veterans connect to that so that we can refer back to that. In time periods where maybe they're stumbling or not progressing, we can really help be a cheerleader in that regard.

I'll do a quick plug here for NVTI. That's the National Veterans Training Institute, and they contract with DOL and train all of your DVOPs and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) across the country and your American Job Centers (AJCs). They also have training

available to HVRP grantees should you get permission from your GOTR. So I encourage you to reach out to your GOTR and look at the training catalogue at NVTI.

We took a course called Managing Case Management, and it was kind of a game changer in helping us expand and innovate some of our assessment tools. This next question was one that came out of it. It seems so painfully obvious after we learned it, but it was a question that we weren't asking. Our goal is to have a person-centered process and assessment tool, but we weren't asking this question, so this came out of our training and the Managing Case Management course at NVTI. It's: "What is the first thing that you think you should accomplish?" We can sit there and think that we know exactly what they need to be successful, but it keeps it open-ended, and this gives the veteran the opportunity to maybe talk about something that we have not yet covered.

If you want to know what barriers you can help with, ask your veteran point blank, "What do you think you should do? What's the first thing you want to accomplish, or one barrier that you want to overcome right now?" The answers can surprise you. Sometimes, they won't, but sometimes they do. It's kind of like a question to make sure that you are providing the services with what the veteran's self-identified needs are. I love that question. Another version of it is, "If somebody else was in your situation, how would you tell that person to proceed?" That helps that person maybe step back a little bit and think through another version of that question.

I'll let Ralph close it out here.

- [Ralph]: These last few questions kind of go back-to-back here: "What are you doing to keep resilient?" and then, "What strategies do you use to bounce back from adversity?" You can't talk about resilience enough because there's a lot of life will throw at you. The reason why we ask this question is because we want to know what's going to keep them moving forward and sustainable.

Sometimes, my veterans are like, "I like to build model airplanes." When I paid him a visit, and I was at his apartment, he had over a dozen model airplanes all over his apartment. He also did painting, so he also had a few paintings all over his apartment that were done personally by him. It's really cool because he goes, "If I didn't do this, I go back. I would slide back into substance abuse over and over again, but having something to do with my hands, and having something to do with my mind. Even with the arts and crafts or model airplanes, it keeps you where you can really focus." Sometimes, it's a family member like a husband or wife with resiliency, and sometimes it's just your little dog. I'm pretty sure you're not surprised by this, but a lot of our veterans love their dogs. It's their passion and their source for comfort. So their biggest thing when we're modeling our IEP or we're modeling a program that's going to help them sustain is what's going to happen to the dog in the process. Especially if we're working with a housing case manager, and there's a possibility that the dog might be separated from them. So this might be something you want to think about when we're talking about some training or job goals with them, especially if it's going to separate them from the thing that helps them.



Resiliency is going to be a big thing. It's going to be a continual part of the assessment. It's going to be a big thing that's going to drive your IEP so that you don't miss the one thing that keeps your veteran motivated. Another thing to think about is, "What strategies do you use to bounce back from adversity?" Rephrase it this way: "If you happened to slide back during the process of case management, what would help the case manager help you get you back on track?" Some of the answers I would get are, "I just want someone to talk to me when I'm in trouble." Or, "I don't want to lose connection or communication with my case manager during a time of need." Some of my veterans have told me, "I am my worst enemy, so if I can have someone to bounce one of my well-planned ideas that I have going on inside my brain right now, I want to make sure I'm doing the right thing." Some of them have given me permission to tell them that they're doing something that's really just silly. I just want to make sure I call them out when they're doing something wrong, so that helps them. That helps our case management because if we can open that line of communication to help them come back from their own adversity or bounce back from that. Because in a lot of the ways, if they don't have that communication, that guideline, or that constant case management, then a lot of them would fall out.

I have a client right now that's been out of HVRP for a while. On occasion, he'll text me a pretty long message saying, "This is what's going on with work. This is what's going on with my housing situation." If I don't respond, then he will feel that he's totally in the dark, and he doesn't feel like he can do it. But my one response keeps him going. Then, he's good to go for another three or six months, and the reason why that's important to him is because he spent ten years in the woods when his house broke down and he didn't know what else to do. It's really important to play that piece for them in their lives, so that we can be that point where they can bounce back from their own personal circumstances, and they don't feel like they're left alone.

- [Curry]: Great points, Ralph. I think the other thing to add is that these questions take inventory of what the veteran's personal resilience is. It could be very high, or it could be next to nothing. So that helps us determine what additional connections and resources we can do.

What are some ways that we can help the veteran reconnect to their own personal resilience because we're not going to be with them? We are only with them for a short time during services, let alone once they exit or follow up, and then leave follow up. So we want to make sure that the veteran is able to develop that personal resilience, or access that personal resilience, that maybe they forgot that they had. These questions help start that conversation and help dictate where we go from there. If there is a bump in the road during services, we can help remind them of their personal resilience and be a support system for them to help overcome whatever that bump was within the service.

Those are just some examples of some of the questions that we like to ask to get along the services. There are a host of others we love to hear as we move to the question and discussion phase of the presentation, and we would love to hear from other grantees on whether they have similar tools or approaches that work or aim to get below the surface. Your participants, things that help build rapport, things that have been valuable for you all—we would love to hear from

some of you guys or answer any questions that you guys have about some of the approaches that we've discussed today.

- [Jenn]: It looks like there is a hand raised. Andrea, hopefully, you should be able to unmute yourself now.

- [Aundrea Stovall]: Hi guys, Andrea here. I just had a question about how you spoke about how some of the clients can be attached to their animals. I have a client who is new to the program here at USVETS in Long Beach, and he has a service dog. I've noticed through conversations with him that he's turned down employment opportunities because he can't bring the dog with him. This dog serves as a sentimental value to him. My question is, what are some recommendations that can be passed down for situations like this? How can we still be of service and encouragement for the client who needs employment so that they can get back on their feet with getting money back into their pockets and for their housing? He's more than qualified to do it; it's just knowing what to do or what's going to happen with his service animal. He's kind of putting himself in a situation, and I want to serve as more motivation and encouragement or just give him some type of tools that he can use to push forward because I know that's something that he wants.

- [Ralph]: Dealing with the service animal or an animal that provides comfort for our veterans is one of the hardest barriers to deal with today with housing or employment. I haven't had a situation in particular that related to your situation where the veteran couldn't take the dog with them to work. At VSC, we have a few veterans that work in peer support or work as case managers that take their dogs with them. They have flexibility that you don't necessarily have in an office space, but when they're working peer support, and they're working to find veterans out in the woods, they have their dogs. It depends on the atmosphere of the work environment; not every atmosphere will allow that.

I would look for other opportunities that allow for the service dog to be present for that veteran. If he's doing warehouse work, that may not be a possibility, but if it's something else that might work within his wheelhouse of experience, or he's willing to train for something new, he might be able to do that. Another question to you, Andrea, is if the veteran's already housed or is the veteran in a shelter? Is he having to leave this animal behind at the shelter or the house? That can determine whether the veteran is willing to part ways with the animal during that period. He's currently sheltered, so I think if he had housing that might change his situation. I have a veteran the same way, he wouldn't go anywhere without his dog. In fact, we couldn't get him in the shelter without finding a home, and we had to work some strings and find somebody that was close by to hold his dog because he wouldn't go into a shelter. After we got him housing, we were able to find him employment, and he was willing to leave his dog at the house.

- [Curry]: If it is a service animal, he may be able to ask for a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and that could also be utilized in the housing process as well. You may want to look at connecting him with vocational rehab if his dog is linked to a disability they may have. Anytime the animals get involved, it can be very challenging. I

definitely know what a challenge that is for you, Andrea, but I think I would try those two avenues, and it may just be as Ralph said, that if he finds a safe environment where he can feel good about leaving his dog, then he may be able to go to work every day.

- [Aundrea]: Awesome. Thank you, guys. I appreciate the positive feedback. Thank you.

- [Jenn]: Are there any other questions or comments for Curry and Ralph? It looks like we do have one hand raised. Yvonne, we'll go ahead and give you the ability to unmute now.

- [Yvonne Small]: Yes, good afternoon. I've enjoyed the training. I am from Education and Health Centers of America, and I'm an employment specialist working with veterans out of Northern New Jersey. I was especially interested in your formal assessment section. The HVRP enrollment, which is person-centered, the one aspect that you spoke about was motivational interview tools. I'm not quite sure what those tools are in relationship to veterans. Is there a website, or is there any idea we can give me any examples of where I can go, or what are some of your motivational interviewing techniques?

- [Curry]: Sure, I can talk about techniques right now and after maybe you can do a quick search to see if you can find some online resources. We do have some individuals that we contract that come in and provide that training for us, but motivational interviewing seeks to unlock a person's own motivation for whatever particular goal they're trying to achieve. People can be at any given point in the change process from undecided, to maybe thinking more about change, or more to not thinking about change. So motivational interviewing tools really help you identify where that particular person is in the change process, and then how you can guide them to self-determining change. Using the motivational interviewing tools helps that person connect with that desire or what desire there is to change. Some of the tools are what they refer to as OEQs in the motivational interview, and it's an acronym for open-ended questions. Think of affirmations as sort of active listening and recognizing some of the things and the points where the person is coming from when they're telling their story.

Also, reflective listening and making sure that the person is feeling heard, and then summarizing. They've just gone through a whole host of things you've listened to, and then you have summarized what they have said. You've said it back to them, and they're like, "Yes, that's exactly what I was saying." From there, you can begin helping that person connect to the steps to change. I'm not an expert in motivational interviewing, so I just did my best to do a little overview there, but there may be some other folks on here that that can speak more eloquently on that.

- [Jenn]: Back in May, we did a Community of Practice training on motivational interviewing and the recording and slides from that are both on the NVTAC website for more in-depth information about motivational interviewing. Also, at our upcoming VLC this Thursday, we'll be talking more about some of those topics as well.

We have another question for you all in the chat. Malik asked, “How do we deal with vets who want to put employment off due to looking for housing and dealing with SSVF?”

- [Ralph]: Recently, a case like that happened. One of my veterans, when he first came into our program, he initially wanted SSVF. During my assessment in SSVF, if I talked to him about HVRP and I said, “Is this something you want to engage with today?” At that moment in time, he was very overwhelmed with the amount of information that was available. He literally was just relieved that he was getting housing assistance. It's been a few months, but every single month when I update my case notes in regards to his service, I asked him about the potential for HVRP and employment services. In that case, the veteran is really focused on housing and that's an important question. The reason why, if you cover multiple counties like we do, it's important for us to answer the housing piece first a lot of times is because we know where that veterans going to live now since the veteran's only interested in one county. We know exactly where they're going to be. That helps us find employment services a lot easier. This one veteran in particular started in Bunkham County, and then wanted to live in Transylvania, which is southwest of Bunkham County. But then, he also wanted to go to Heywood County, which is another thirty minutes north of there, but they also talked about Rutherford County. We service all those different counties, but he ended up in Pope County, which is where I live, and long story short, he found housing there. He went to the substance abuse program at the VA first, so there are many things that we have to figure out as far as housing or other supportive services before HVRP. Now you can do the employment interview ahead of time and get them set up. You may not be engaging with them in HVRP right away but are following up to make sure they're ready to engage with HVRP services or if there re any other support services that we can provide.

- [Curry]: I may approach it from a slightly different angle. I love this question. I think we could do probably five or six sessions on this particular question because it's a challenge. Is this your internal SSVF program, or is it an external program that you guys are partnering with? I would say, first try to leverage your partnership with the SSVF partner so that you guys are talking to the veteran in unison and not really giving competing information. The reality is, and I'm sure everyone on the call sees this, is that rents are through the roof right now. Higher than they've ever been. Housing is more competitive and more scarce than it's ever been. The reality right now is that for a lot of our veterans who are experiencing homelessness right now, they have to be able to work on employment and housing simultaneously. Housing applications are that much more competitive, you have to be able to demonstrate income, so that may be one angle that you approach that with your SSVF partner.

The other thing to consider as well is that from the SSVF standpoint, they are operating from a Housing First model, and Housing First mandates that housing is the primary intervention needed to address housing. So, they are not going to restrict their clients by saying, “Hey, you have to go, do X, Y, and Z in order to get housing.” There are also ways that they can connect to supports that will benefit housing. I hope that your SSVF partner is taking a Housing First approach, but not a housing-only approach. I think in the SSVF world, I know I was guilty of this as an SSVF case manager, that you get tunnel vision on housing and nothing else, and you

don't see the larger picture on how your employment and other resources are going to benefit housing. I would make sure that your SSVF partner sees the advantage of getting employment is going to make them more competitive on their housing application. It's also going to make them stabilize faster because they have income in place.

The other thing to think about for your SSVF program is Shallow Subsidy. All SSVF Shallow Subsidy programs, which is a two-year subsidy for housing, were asked to outline how HVRP would be integrated into their program. So I would have those conversations with your SSVF providers and hold them accountable for how they have outlined how they're going to integrate HVRP into that Shallow Subsidy.

The last suggestion I have would be to get face to face in front of a prospective client. We have a more successful conversion rate to enrolling that person. So it may be that your SSVF partner is in good faith trying to connect this person, and the person isn't coming to the table for any reason. You can't rely on that SSVF partner to continue referring and not having success. If you have an opportunity to get in front of this person and start building that rapport and start outlining some simple small things that you can do through the course of services, maybe the person won't feel quite as overwhelmed. We've seen in the past where we've offered HVRP on multiple levels, and the person did not enroll. And then we get a phone call, and they're like, "Hey? I started a job last week or two weeks ago, and I really don't have any gas, and I don't have any shoes, and you know, if I was trained, I could make more on the job." They may no longer be eligible, or they may no longer be suitable for the program.

I think if you talk about those points, that may be something that you can proactively try, but really with HVRP and SSVF, there are parts about these programs that align really well, and there are parts that have nuances to them that don't. The more that you and your SSVF partner can understand those differences the better. You can work together in serving that particular client, and you don't have to sell somebody on housing, but we find that you do have to advocate for employment with your veterans. So when you can do that face to face, we have found it's more successful. That is a great question, Malik. Thank you.

- [Jenn]: One quick plug on the topic of SSVF. In November, at our Community of Practice event, we will have a guest speaker from SSVF Shallow Subsidy. For a more in-depth conversation about SSVF specifically, I would recommend attending that event. Any other questions or comments?

I don't see any hands raised. If you have more questions, feel free to keep them coming in the chat as we move on. Curry and Ralph, thank you both so much for sharing some of your fantastic work with us today. That was super helpful information.

- [Curry]: If you guys have more questions, keep them coming in the chat, and then we'll just continue on.

- [Ralph]: Absolutely. Thank you all.

- [Jenn]: To finish up our conversation today, we're just going to talk a little bit more about some specifics on intake and enrollments. First, here just some tips on what to keep in mind when you're going through your intake and enrollment process.

We want to make sure that this process is structured and streamlined. Grantees should have a standardized process for intake and enrollments, including things such as which staff members can enroll veterans, which forms you are to use, and when and which procedures you should be using. These should be just some basic standardized processes that your program has that you're utilizing with each veteran. It's not an overly prescriptive process, but you want to make sure it's streamlined and structured enough where you know you're hitting all the key points. You're moving the veteran along through the process, and not missing any key steps.

Next thing we have here, which I also mentioned at the beginning, is proof of eligibility. It's a critical part of that intake and enrollment process that verification of veteran status and homeless status should be collected. It seems so obvious, but we always include this as a reminder a couple of times, because that is really a critical part of this point in the enrollment process.

Somewhere in the intake and enrollment process, you should be including an overview of the program and open discussion with the veteran and allow them the space to ask questions. Because they're entering this new program, maybe they're connected with other programs already. You want to make sure that when you're enrolling them, they know exactly what this is. They know what HVRP is. They know what support and services you're going to provide for them are. It's really just setting them up for success, right? So they know what to expect. They know what they're working for, and they know what this program is. Some sort of program orientation, while it'll probably look a little different depending on which grantee is providing this orientation, but you just want to make sure that they know exactly what your program is and what they can expect throughout the process.

And again, verify veteran status first. The preferred method of veteran status verification, as we all know, is the DD-214. However, if the DD-214 cannot be obtained, the Grant Officer Memorandum 1-21 currently allows for veteran status to be documented by either the HINQ or SQUARES—VA Medical Centers Hospital Inquiry or Status Query and Response Exchange System. Those can be used only if a DD-214, for whatever reason, cannot be obtained. At that time you, can also use them to verify their veteran status.

Another thing to keep in mind is to take your time. The decision to enroll a veteran does not have to be made during the first meeting with that veteran. If it is, then fantastic! But that's not going to be the case for every single veteran that you're working with, and it's okay to take your time through that process. The veteran might not be ready to commit today but may be ready next week. If they're not ready day one, we want to make sure we're not closing that door for them. If they came back next week and they're ready, and they want to enroll, then we're picking it up right where we left off and enrolling them. You're not always going to be meeting with veterans who are ready day one. It may take some time for them to think things through and ask questions. Whatever that process looks like for them, we want to make sure we're keeping that

door open for them to make that decision to come back when they're ready. So, collect only what's essential at the first meeting, how to contact the veteran and things like that, and focus your energy on having a conversation and making connection, not just filling out a form.

From the first instance that you meet with a veteran, you want to be working on building that relationship, building a connection, building trust and rapport. That's just going to benefit the veteran throughout the entire HVRP process. If you're dedicated one hundred percent to just filling out forms and things like that on day one, you're losing out on the opportunity to start building that connection which is really critical for this ongoing relationship you're going to have with the veteran. Taking a step back in that first meeting or so and making sure that you're taking the time to build trust, build connection, build a relationship, and then moving on to filling out those forms or whatever that process looks.

Next strategy we have here is information sharing. If a veteran is referred by a partner, for example, an AJC, a housing provider, another community partner, you could ask them to share basic information, so the veteran does not have to repeat themselves. Of course, this can only be done if there is an appropriate release of information that is signed by the veteran. You can't just share information without having an active ROI. If there is an ROI, this can be an extremely beneficial strategy to making sure you have all the information you need, and that all of the partners working with the veteran are all on the same page with the same information working towards common goals.

Along those lines, whenever it's possible, having representation from the referring partner at that initial meeting with the veteran simplifies the process. Also, in some cases, maybe the veteran has already been working with that partner, and they already have a relationship. It could make them feel more comfortable to have someone that they already know in the room, depending on what that situation is, but having representation from those wrap-around services that referred them to HVRP can be a beneficial strategy as well.

We'll do have a quick poll here. Have you experienced any challenges with intake and assessment? While you're taking this poll, if maybe the answer is yes, you could type in the chat what that challenge is. I'm sure if you're experiencing the challenge, someone else is experiencing the same or a similar challenge as well.

The poll says yes and yes. That was not on purpose. But we'll consider the first to be yes, and the second to be no. Sorry about that. Again, the first yes is yes, and the second yes is no.

We'll go ahead and close the poll now, and we have a couple of comments in the chat. First comment, because the client may have a lot of other worries, and they just want their services. Some are impatient, I'm sure that's something everyone has experienced. They have a lot of things they're trying to take care of. Sometimes they just want to receive those services now. It can be a long process, so that's a great one.

Next, being able to obtain the DD-214 with the character discharge and not being able to verify homelessness while doing phone assessment. That's a big one there, being able to do assessments on the phone has created a lot of flexibility and opportunity. But there are also those downsides like collecting that verification.

Next, no address to mail items to. I'm sure that's one a lot of people see as well.

Having a lot of at risk versus people or veterans currently experiencing homelessness, but being at risk of homelessness. Clients only wanting to enroll for supportive services and not employment.

Here's a big one, getting the client to commit and then show up for the meeting. Building buy-in from the veteran is key there. Something Ralph said earlier that I loved was making sure they also have skin in the game. That can also help with them committing and making those meetings and showing up for your appointments

When they have no phone or no contact information.

You guys have a lot of great comments!

Lots of clients are more concerned about securing housing than employment and do not understand the benefits of securing employment to be able to secure housing. That's a big one. So, veterans who are searching for housing maybe put employment on the back burner when they could be searching for housing and employment. It doesn't have to be one or the other.

Difficulty catching up with the client one week, maybe intake the next few days the assessment and the veteran becomes nonresponsive. A lot of substance issues, mental health issues. If they have HUD-VASH, they have to make a minimum or maximum. So also, knowing that veterans are working with other programs that have different requirements and keep being mindful of that.

The veteran wanted to do the assessment and intake, but once they found out their civilian girlfriend or boyfriend did not qualify, they no longer showed interest in doing the assessment or intake.

Being over income, anger issues, and different personal issues, sometimes making training a priority, and the last one says job search while waiting for housing helps.

That's a great point.

Reading through some of these challenges that you all are putting in the chat, it seems that they cover a lot of similar topics, so just goes to show you if you're experiencing a challenge, someone else is probably experiencing the same challenge. These are not unique to just one program. Everyone is seeing these same challenges. Any other thoughts before we end today?



Thank you all so much for attending today. Again, this is the first of four sessions. If you're not registered for the next three, you can get those registration links on our website. Our next one is this upcoming Thursday, and we'll be continuing on with the HVRP process.

Our email and website is listed up here as well. The recording and the slides will be posted to our website. Thank you again to our fantastic guest speakers today, Ralph and Curry. We appreciate your participation. Thank you to all the attendees for coming today, and thank you for participating. And hopefully we will see you on Thursday.

We will also be posting in the chat the survey for today's session, as well.