

## Job Placement and Retention Virtual Learning Course (VLC) Transcript

- [Steve Dudasik]: Hi everyone, this is Steve Dudasik with the National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC); welcome today. Thank you for joining us. We're just going to give it a few minutes, as we have been doing for other people to jump on, but feel free to put your name in the chat so everyone can see who is on. Thank you for being with us today. I see a lot of people are putting their name and organization in the chat. That would be great if you haven't yet done so, please feel free to do so. Looking forward to our discussion today.

Welcome everyone today to our fourth in a series of virtual learning courses. And today, we're going to be talking about Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) and Job Development and Retention.

[Next Slide]: My name is Steve Dudasik, and I'm facilitating this discussion today. My colleagues, Sarah Chung and Jenn Steigerwald, will join us in the presentation. We're very happy to have a guest speaker, Dr. Chambers, here today as part of this presentation. Very excited to have her with us today.

[Next Slide]: If you've been on these webinars with us last week and a half or so, we always like to describe what NVTAC provides to all of you, both on an individual and a group basis. We run peer-to-peer meetings as well as these webinars and provide individual support for grantees to help them along with their local HVRP programs.

[Next Slide]: We also work with the national and regional U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) staff and relay to them lessons learned from the field, what your challenges might be, and support them with their program oversight and help them with the development of future HVRP programming and responses. We quantify your satisfaction, and we share best practices and lessons learned. So that's part of our role. And again, you could always reach out to us directly at [nvtac.org](http://nvtac.org), which I'm sure we will reinforce during this talk today. So, I want to welcome you all, and we'll just run right into our presentation today.

[Next Slide]: We are going to start off by talking a little bit about job development and the skill sets needed and a couple of key points. We're looking at job development, the key points that we are going to be speaking about today. We want to be able to manage expectations beginning with outreach and understanding the local job work market.

Having a strategy to approach employers directly is a big part of job development and placement. We utilize all resources and support and understand that it really does take a village. It's not about silos for HVRP providers. It really takes an effort to create a good placement outcome and help our veterans succeed in employment. And it's always good to remember that if you provide veteran-centered job development, a placement is going to be a successful job outcome. And I

will say during our talk today, you'll find that there's a lot of overlap from what we've been doing with our last three virtual learning courses, which is great because it all leads together.

Certainly, this whole talk today and our previous talks are about effective case management and building trust with the veterans you're honored to serve. We always must keep that in mind while we're doing this work throughout our HVRP process and services. We are going to expand a little bit on each of these topics here.

[Next Slide]: We are talking about expectations. What does that really mean? I think we've discussed this a little bit in our other trainings about setting realistic expectations about jobs. And what does that mean? This begins at outreach. When you're outreaching to a veteran, it's always important that we orient the veteran to the HVRP services. What are you offering? What are you doing? Learn about the veteran's expectations of engaging with you and your wonderful services and what their general ideas are around employment.

We talked a little about the Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) development, outreach, engagement, and intake. You are setting the expectations and learning about the veteran's expectations right at the beginning of engagement. You're also orienting them to HVRP and what you can offer as an organization, and how you're providing services. It's really important to understand that right at engagement. We are talking about employment with the veteran. We were talking about what HVRP can offer, and we're beginning to learn where the veteran is at, where they want to go, and what they are expecting coming to you.

Often a discussion could be, "Hey, I was sent to you because I hear you give out jobs." That may not be what HVRP is about because you know you don't give out jobs. It's about mutual work together to find what is doable and, in employment, meeting the individual's goals, desires, and skill sets at this point in time.

HVRP is not a place that just hands out jobs. That is something to be aware of when you are orienting the veteran into your HVRP program. It is also important to understand with this conversation what hard and soft skills are required in helping the veteran understand what they need for their chosen career and what might be needed both at entry and moving through a career path. What do you need to be successful?

Someone might come to you and say, "I'm interested in working in computer troubleshooting within a career." Okay, what do you need from that? What is out there that you could begin to learn about, and what's required to become a computer troubleshooter, both on the hard, demanding skills of the job as well as the behavioral or soft skills required for that profession? And I've mentioned, or we've been mentioning, such things as giving the veteran homework to understand what is required for their chosen career, as well as, in the counseling process or case management process, to begin to understand what the soft skills are. Help the veteran learn what soft skills are required for that chosen career—understanding such things as employer culture. Does the person have the behavioral mindset or ability right now to succeed in their chosen

career? Understanding workplace behaviors and what is required based on that particular chosen career is very, very essential to this work.

It goes down to the veteran's current skill sets. What are they bringing that's more of a hard skill? What are their transferable skills from what they were doing in the military or prior to coming to you for any jobs that you had beyond the military or prior to the military? How does that all fit into their current career goals and mindset of where they want to go?

Also, you're going to be looking at managing expectations around job interview skills. Why is that important? Well, it's important to ask the veteran, "Have you ever interviewed for a job? What's that like?" Often, when you engage in the military, there's a little bit of a job interview process, but it can be very different from being out of the military and moving into neighborhood work or civilian work. So as a case manager, you need to look at that and provide the supports and ideas necessary for effective job development.

Also, managing expectations and learning about the individual's long-term career goals. We have talked a lot previously about career pathing and really get a sense of that as you develop your work with the individual. When you have an IEP development, and you're moving towards a job placement to really get a sense of where the person wants to go with their career, and that is key to career success. That whole idea of the initial job, the initial job placement, or the initial job that has been set up for an interview may not be the long-term goal. But the idea is to help the individual succeed by moving into a career that will start developing their long-term career goals and equals long-term success.

[Next Slide]: What are our roles as HVRP providers? We really must have a sense of what our local job market is. What is your community offering, and do these job opportunities match the skill sets and goals that your veterans that you're honored to serve are bringing to you? You do this in a variety of ways. Obviously, every community has job market data when you're looking at what careers are available. What industries are in your locality? Really understanding where the needs might be for your local job market is often beyond research. It's very effective to network with your local business associations. Whether that is an industrial business or organization, Chambers of Commerce, and any local business association or group that has their finger on the pulse of what's available in your community, it will help you begin to educate the veteran to move into a career in your location and to also understand what businesses are needing in terms of skill sets. And what are they looking for when they're seeking to hire veterans? It's also important when you're understanding the local job market through this. You're going to develop a local job bank of job postings industry by industry, so you always have that as part of your HVRP program. And certainly, when you look at job banks, your local American Job Centers (AJCs) might have them as well, so you're coordinating all of that to have something internal for your program. It's out there in your locality in terms of employment opportunities.

Also, something that I felt important when I was doing this work with nonprofits around employment programming and doing job development and placement; I always felt it helpful to look at your current clientele and what are their skill sets. What are they bringing to the table?

And you can begin to either block out or get a good sense of what skills the folks have that you're serving within your HVRP program. What skill sets do they have that could begin to define your program? For example, this is our employer bank; these are our possible employees that we could share with the community. We have a good sense of what skill sets are being made available through the people that we're bringing in the door. Understanding what your veterans are bringing to you with their skill sets and what their career goals are is very helpful for HVRP practice. In that way, it's more of a systemic idea of what you are offering to the community and to your employers to have that database of skill sets.

I'll just move on. Jenn is now going to take on the next section. We're talking a little bit about moving to these other elements of approaching employers.

- [Jenn Steigerwald]: Thank you, Steve. As he mentioned, we're going to shift gears a little bit into approaching employers, which is a critical piece at this point in the process. Without employers, you're kind of stuck. On the screen, you'll see a couple of different strategies for how to approach employers. But it's also really important to emphasize the fact that you should be working on creating real, lasting partnerships with these employers. It's not about just calling an employer and saying, "I have a veteran that's in need of a job." That shouldn't be where you're starting. It's as simple as cold calling and creating partnerships. You want to know who these employers are and what they do, and, in turn, you have the opportunity to explain what HVRP is. Explain what you can provide for them. This partnership isn't just beneficial for the HVRP program, but it's also beneficial for the employers, so they can use the HVRP as a resource for when they're hiring. They can look at you as if you're that stable kind of supply of really strong employees that they can pull from right when they need to hire for whatever position it may be. So, starting in a place where you're just calling them, creating that partnership as if you were creating a partnership with another organization in the community and getting to know them and having them get to know you and having them as this lasting staple rather than just a one-time call where you just ask if they have any jobs available, they didn't know who you are, or what HVRP is because you've never talked to them before. The odds of them taking it seriously or following through on that call is slim. "Actually, I have this position available right now that would be a great fit for one of your veterans." If they have never heard from you before, or you don't have that partnership, that might not actually work out for the veteran.

If you don't have that partnership already, they may not be as willing to hear what you have to say on the phone, so starting these relationships with the employers prior to the ask, prior to seeing if they have any jobs available—just using the same partnership strategies as you would if you were creating a partnership with another resource in the community.

And lastly, in this section, we'll be talking about utilizing resources and supports. It's important not just for the veteran but for the HVRP itself, though it looks different. The services for the resources and support that a veteran might be utilizing are different than what HVRP needs to utilize. We did talk about this in some of our previous sessions. For the veteran utilizing both personal support and then other supports that are in the community, they can be utilizing family and friends if they have that network of personal supports, peers, and then within the workplace

as well. This includes networking that they've done previously with other agencies, programs, organizations, employers, whatever their personal and professional network looks like. Those are the resources and supports that we're looking to utilize at this stage. Whereas for the HVRP, we are looking at existing internal and external partnerships, as we just talked about a couple of minutes ago. Utilizing that employer network that you've been creating partnerships with your employers that you pull from.

There's that set of organizations, and then also the other nonprofits that you're working with at other organizations in the community that you're meeting with, that you have partnerships with. Other programs that are serving veterans, other programs that are serving individuals experiencing homelessness. All these programs are so important to create, maintain, and then utilize as resources and supports.

And then lastly, colleagues who view employment as a solution to ending veteran homelessness, colleagues who have the same mission as you, colleagues that have either a shared mission or a shared service base. The people they serve are similar to yours. Whether it's just veterans, whether it's just individuals experiencing homelessness, or whether it's both veterans experiencing homelessness, utilizing that network can be extremely beneficial at this stage.

As Steve mentioned earlier, I'm thrilled to introduce our guest speaker today, Dr. Lore Chambers, who's going to be talking a little bit more about some of these things from the grantee perspective. So, from the perspective of an HVRP program, I'll go ahead and turn it over to you, Dr. Chambers.

- [Dr. Chambers]: Okay, we want to talk about veteran placement.

[Next Slide]: We want to get to the goal. The goal, of course, is reaching the goal for the veterans in that program. We want to reach that goal as quickly as possible. We're going to talk about timing collaboration, communication, placement, and follow-up. Sometimes we forget about the follow-up, so let's look at each one of these items.

[Next Slide]: We are going to talk a little bit about time. The veterans are engaged with the goal of employment placement in mind, so we want to make sure that when we get them, it's part of the intake that we work on that individual employment plan. As Steve said, the case manager should be mindful of matching veterans with available opportunities.

Sometimes, we don't listen as well as we may. Sometimes, the veteran is in a hurry to get a job because they need money now, but it may not be the perfect fit for them. So we want to look at fit also. Not just survival; it's important to maximize the information received during the assessment to present the best fit. Naturally, better skills and available positions, with the job development as Steve and Jennifer talked about earlier. We want to make sure that we assess the better skill sets than what they did in the military. They may have added additional skills since they've been out of the military. I know we have veterans that went to Vietnam, and some of them are still wanting to work, so we can't really look that far back sometimes because life has

changed, jobs have changed, and skill sets and requirements have changed. We want to look at how we can help them develop new skills if they do not have them or updated skills available depending on location positions.

On the East Coast of Maryland, we have a lot of chicken plants. We have issues with transportation. It's better not to have cars. We're trying to get a veteran to job openings. We want to work with employers to see if they can provide transportation because that's a really big issue for us on the Eastern Shore. As we are looking at what the veterans' needs are, we need to get all that information at the beginning. Depending on locations, I said that earlier, case managers need to move quickly and join case conferencing meetings with community members and employees to ensure a viable placement. Keep in mind that placement without readiness equals failure.

I'm not sure what other HVRP grantees are experiencing as far as getting the veterans to go to trainings, but it is like pulling teeth for us. The job training is available. We have partners in place to provide it. We even have facilities here to do virtual trainings with the veterans but getting them to attend is very difficult.

[Next Slide]: We build teams through collaboration with our Continuum of Care (CoC) agencies. We have the Continuum of Care organizations on Eastern Shore, Maryland, because we cover ten counties on the Eastern Shore, and so there is a CoC that deals with three larger counties. Then we have another that deals with five small counties on the upper shore, so we have covered the entire shore. We also collaborate with the American Job Centers (AJCs), Chambers of Commerce, colleges, and employers.

We work with them to amass a wealth of information about job availability, as they say, we use every partner we have in some way because these veterans have different issues and barriers to employment. We need all the partners that we work with to help us combat those barriers so we can get them placed. More importantly, help them to retain the placements. The team will also be helpful in addressing those barriers, such as mental health, behavioral health, and especially a job with training. What we found is that most of the events we have encountered, with the agreement of seeking to build skills to work for the placement, but they end up taking survival jobs. They grab the first thing they can get, which may not even cover their basic expenses. Now we are looking for positions that will at least cover that.

A lot of the veterans, because they are homeless, most of them that we encounter from our partners that refer them to us are working on the immediate crisis. We also want to make sure that while the other agencies are helping them deal with the housing crisis, we get them to attend the trainings that are available to them to look at their skill sets. Look at other trainings that may be available at community colleges or AJCs. What they have available to veterans, we want them to go and take advantage of those trainings.

We are skipping this step of addressing barriers. Almost as sure as placement failure, working collaboratively with the CoC team to include Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing

and legal aid can reduce some of the financial pressure so that the veterans can concentrate on the available training with a better employment fit. We also happen to be a supported service for veterans' family provider on the shore as well, so we also have the ability to refer in house, which we do.

[Next Slide]: Communication is absolutely the key. Contact with the veterans should be often. I usually recommend to the staff that they do a weekly call to relate training information that is available and positions that meet their interest and assess their transportation needs.

If the veterans do not hear from us, they may think that we are not interested in them, so I tell them case management means contact. You have to keep up with them. If you get them quickly, you stay with them. You can communicate with them often and let them know you're working on their behalf.

The veterans should not have the excuse of not hearing from the case manager on employment availability. The veterans should be provided at least two to three job encounters that turn into a placement on a weekly basis. One of the greatest challenges I hear from staff is that the veterans do not actually call back. If they're working with supported services and veteran families, case conferencing with the case manager on that side. Have you heard from this person? What's going on with them? We work very closely with those agencies because someone has heard from that veteran. So, if we're not hearing from them, our partners may know exactly what's going on. But if that veteran is enrolled in those programs, we should know exactly who their case managers are and stay in touch with them.

The team members can also bring pressure to bear in that program agreement. Their program has required compliance with increasing income to obtain or sustain housing. So if they're involved with SSVF, they are expected to sustain the housing placement because there's only a limited amount of time. The SSVF can pay their phone minutes for them, so they need to be actively engaged in getting a position that will sustain them.

And over here on the Eastern Shore, and I'm sure it's an issue in a lot of places, the rents have really gotten expensive, and the jobs are not keeping up with the cost of the rents in that area, so it's a struggle. Some people are working two jobs, and they almost have to in order to sustain their housing. So, we want to make sure that we are helping the veterans get the best placement possible.

[Next Slide]: Getting to placement, depending on the employment availability, job placement should be accomplished within 30 days of enrolling. We don't make that often. Sometimes we need it a lot quicker. It depends on the motivation of the veteran. And also, this is an aggressive expectation. However, we do consistently communicate with the veterans and assist with training and placement.

They tend to lose interest quickly and stop answering their phones, especially if the partner agencies such as SSVF have addressed the immediate housing crisis. Then they get a little

comfortable because someone else is paying the bill, so they don't feel as much pressure to get the job that they need as long as someone else is paying that bill.

Building relationships with hiring managers is essential. The success of the veteran's placement and these relationships with the employers can help the placement.

If a placement is unsuccessful, a good relationship and communication with the employer can ensure that the manager may consider hiring another veteran in the future. We don't want to continue to place veterans with a specific employer, and they keep falling out of the jobs. We have a great manufacturing company. They hired quite a few veterans at one time from our agency, and unfortunately, none of them have sustained placements. The hiring managers never contacted us to let us know that there were issues, and the case manager did not check with the hiring manager to see how people were doing, so there was a breakdown on both sides of the relationship. We needed that information to see how we could best address that in the future.

If the veteran finds the position on their own and it's a survival job, you may consider not taking credit for that placement, but continue to work with the veteran and help them receive a more viable position, especially if it's a better position and they're motivated and cooperative. A lot of them do go out, and they'll just pick up anything. Unfortunately, they don't stay long, so we want to make sure we have some longevity in our placement.

[Next Slide]: Follow up. It's so important, and I tell the case managers all the time: constant communication with the veteran and with hiring managers is crucial. Once a veteran is placed, the staff is encouraged to touch base with the veteran today. How is he doing without this ongoing communication?

We have found that some veterans churn jobs. We check at the end of the quarter for follow-up reporting and find that the veteran is no longer employed, and we have to start the process again if they still qualify for our program. Once they are housed after 60 days, we can't pick them back up because they no longer qualify for the program, so we have to have constant communication and follow up.

We've hired persons who presented for services and stabilized their housing. And they would qualify for higher-paying jobs. I currently have five veterans on staff. I have veterans with lived experience of homelessness on staff. We have helped veterans that were homeless that have been placed with us to get transportation so that they can get back and forth to the job. We have to be a little more creative. What I found is that veterans help veterans a lot better sometimes than case managers who are not there, so it's good to have not just social workers but other veterans on staff as well, especially those with lived experience.

[Next Slide]: I just want to know if there were any questions. I wanted to provide my contact information. If I can be of assistance, please let me know. Anyone can reach out to me. I would be more than happy to share any information that I can. Thank you all so much.



- [Jenn]: Thank you so much, Dr. Chambers, and it does look like we have a question in the chat. Camilo asked, "Placed after how many days?" I'm not sure if this was in reference to the example. But Camilo, if you want to expand on that question, if you raise your hand, I can unmute you. Perfect. He raised his hand. I'll go ahead and unmute you now.

- [Camilo]: Hello, how are you? Doctor, I just had a question about retention. You mentioned something; if they were placed in employment after 60 days, they no longer are eligible for more services. Is that correct?

- [Dr. Chambers]: No, if they are placed in housing and come to us as homeless, and we have a window that we can work with them once they are placed in housing. Like with supported services for veteran families, once they're housed, they are no longer eligible for our program after the 60-day window.

- [Camilo]: So you were talking for housing?

- [Dr. Chambers]: No, what I'm saying is, if we place them in a job, and their housing crisis was solved, and they lose the job depending on how long they were housed, we may not be able to bring them back into the program because they would no longer be eligible because they are no longer homeless.

- [Camilo]: What if the client had a job, was not placed but has a HUD voucher, and within three months, he loses his job, and it moved on over to the second quarter? Will he still be eligible for retention purposes only or to be re-enrolled into the program?

- [Dr. Chambers]: He could not be re-enrolled because he's now housed. We will follow up to make sure they are employed; however, we will not be able to re-enroll them if they are replaced in housing.

- [Camilo]: The thing is, I have a lot of clients that have the voucher, but they do not have an apartment yet.

- [Dr. Chambers]: Well, as long as they're not housed, we can work with them.

- [Camilo]: They are still homeless, excellent. I had a client that had a position for a year already, we've been in retention for over a year, and he completed the program. I wanted to know, once that year is over, do we stop doing retention on the client after that one year?

- [Dr. Chambers]: We are supposed to track them for four quarters after the end of our fiscal year, so it's actually depending on where in that first year that we work with them. Let's say we work within the second quarter. We monitor them through the end of the fiscal year; then we have to monitor them for another four quarters.

- [Camilo]: Okay, so in this case, it will be a year and a half of working with that person. After we're done monitoring them for, say, that year-and-a-half period, when will they be eligible for re-enrolling them?

- [Dr. Chambers]: You can carry them over to your new fiscal year. If they lose their job, let's say we enroll them in quarter two of the fiscal year, they lost their job. Instead of just following them after the fiscal year ends, we can bring them into the new fiscal year.

- [Camilo]: Okay, and we're with them still as a role of a client, correct? Okay, thank you so much for your answers. Thank you.

- [Jenn]: And it looks like there are a couple of questions in the chat as well, so I'll just read them out. First, Tanya asks, "Since work is limited on the Eastern Shore, how difficult is it to provide other than survival jobs for veterans?" We've got some interference going on here. Alright, I'm muting everyone. Let me try one more time. "Since work is limited on the Eastern Shore, how difficult is it to provide other than survival jobs for veterans?"

- [Dr. Chambers]: It can be pretty difficult, depending on the veteran's skill set. That's why we work with our CoC. We have over one hundred organizations involved with that. And so sometimes you may get a veteran who has a social work background. They fit perfectly with the Department of Social Services. We sit on that CoC, so you know we don't just have employees outside of that circle that we're working with. We're also working with their partners to hire better as well. We let them know we have veterans with these skill sets we are with the AJC. We are networking all over the place to see where we can place our veterans. We don't want all veterans to be at the chicken plant. Some of them don't want to be in manufacturing. There are some that want to learn to weld, so we're working with the college to get them that training, and then we're working with the employers in the manufacturing industries like the big ship building that is here to hire those directly. It takes a lot of work and some fancy footwork, but it can happen. So there are other opportunities outside of just the vacancy list that we may see posted online. It does take working with those different employers in all of our circles in order to make it happen.

- [Jenn]: Thank you, Dr. Chambers. Tanya says, "Thank you" in the chat as well. Does anybody else have additional questions? If you do, if you raise your hand, I can unmute you so you can ask. Any last questions for Dr. Chambers? We do have a hand up. I'll go ahead and unmute you now, Brad.

- [Brad]: Hello, my name is Brad, and I'm the resource specialist here in Stockton, California. I put my question in the chat. So what plans are in place for housing our 290 and 288 veterans? If people don't know, that's a rape charge, and 288 are under fourteen; it's with children.

So, it's hard to find housing for these veterans. Local shelters won't accept them—a lot of our veterans—and other companies don't accept them. We're the only ones that accept them that I know of here in California. There are a lot of landlords who won't take them. It's hard to get

property managers to put them in, so they end up sleeping on the streets. Also, companies don't want to hire them. We also have older veterans that maybe haven't worked in a long time, and their skills sets aren't that great from a lack of working. They end up falling in the cracks which furthers their mental health issues.

From my standpoint, and I think from everybody in my office as well, I think this is where we need to put a lot of our resources and a lot of our time and thinking and planning into it. Where are we going to house these veterans? Because it's hard on us to turn these veterans away, and tell them, "I'm sorry we can't find you housing."

- [Dr. Chambers]: One thing I'm curious about is, how do the landlords know the history, because there's confidential information?

- [Brad]: It is confidential information, you're correct. But I'm kind of new here, so I don't know how that goes down. I don't know if anybody else from the office is in here, but that is what I see. It's hard to get these veterans housed, so I don't know if anybody thought about this or if it's been brought up because it's a problem.

- [Dr. Chambers]: Those who have been involved with domestic violence, we work with the life crisis center in the system. As far as housing them, it's a concern. We make sure the landlord knows nothing about that. We don't share that type of information, so they are not discriminated against because of what they've been through. Also, with that transitional age youth population, we have a group here called the Phoenix project. They work with young people aged 18 to 26.

Like I say, get him the care he needs. Different agencies assist in different ways. Also, we have good relationships with certain apartment managers to support the services of veterans and actually let us know when they have vacancies available. Because we have to place other veterans and families there, they are very open to working with us. So we have some select landlords that we target certain people to that may have had difficulty. They will help us look out for them because sometimes the landlords will call us and say, "You need to come and do a wellness check on this particular veteran because I have not seen them for a while" and that helps us keep track of what's going on with them, as well as the employees. We just have to build those relationships and use that coordinated care, because there are usually different agencies on those continuums that can help solve that problem.

- [Jenn]: Thank you for that, Dr. Chambers, and we do have one more hand raised. I will go ahead and unmute John, now.

- [John]: Hi, thank you. Can you hear me? Yes, so earlier in the conversation, we were talking about the eligibility of HUD-VASH recipients and the window closing on them. Can we elaborate on that a little bit? My understanding is that anybody that's participating in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) or the Tribal HUD-VASH programs would be eligible for the HVRP program.

- [Dr. Chambers]: They are eligible as long as they haven't been housed longer than 60 days. Once they're housed, they are no longer homeless.

- [John]: Okay, thank you very much.

- [Jenn]: And we have one more hand up. So, Brandon, I'll go ahead and unmute you now.

- [Brandon]: Hi, can you hear me? Okay, I'm just following up on what John just said. From my understanding, anyone participating in HUD-VASH or SSVF, if they have part of their rent being paid or all of their rent being paid, even if they're still housed as long as they're enrolled with SSVF or HUD-VASH or using those services, they still qualify for our program, even if they're housed?

- [Dr. Chambers]: That's not my understanding. If they're looking for housing, placement, or haven't been housed longer than 60 days, my understanding is...

- [Brandon]: Yes, yes, and from my understanding, and what I've been told and trained, I'm relatively new too, so I'm still learning. But from what I've been told and I've seen, this already happens with clients. For example, I'll use an example here. Someone is receiving money from SSVF to help pay rent there. He's living with family. He's not on the lease. He's, you know, technically couch surfing, I would say couch surfing falls under the definition of homeless. But he's living in a house and SSVF is paying his rent, but he automatically qualified for a program because he has subsidized rent. He can't pay his whole rent without that assistance, or he would be homeless. So, he qualified for the program, and there are multiple other cases where people, if they receive assistance from HUD VASH or SSVF, at those qualifying co-enrollments, they still qualify for our program, even though they're technically housed.

- [Dr. Chambers]: I think you may want to talk to your technical rep with labor, because when we look in the program guide on the eligibility, if they're housed, and they're in that 60-day window, my understanding is, even though they were SSVF and HUD-VASH, if they are already under a roof in a house, and have been housed longer than 60 days, they do not qualify. I would ask you to check with your technical rep at labor to get a classification on that eligibility so you don't get in trouble.

- [Brandon]: Well, I'll check on it. But I mean, these are just things that have been harped on me from the beginning; they're in those programs. That's an automatic qualification, because they can't survive or pay rent for be housed without those programs, and I see another chat. Does couch surfing really count as homeless? That's what I've been told. That's what I was trained on. If someone's not on the lease, if they're not paying for their own rent completely, if they're receiving aid from SSVF, or if they're couch surfing, that technically falls under the homeless definition.

- [Dr. Chambers]: I would still air on the side of saying check with labor to get a good understanding of what the eligibility criteria is with SSVF programs. The people that we are referring to for HVRP are in hotels. They're in cars. If they're couch surfing, and they have a

letter that they have to leave within a certain number of days, then they qualify for the for HVRP. But if we've already housed them, we do not refer them. They've been housed for longer than 60 days.

- [Brandon]: Okay, I'll have to look into this this morning.

- [Dr. Chambers]: Better to be safe than sorry.

- [Jenn]: Thank you everyone for the questions, and I will add, if you have specific scenarios that you have questions about, that can look different from program to program on eligibility. Always best to check with your Grants Officer Technical Representative (GOTR), just for clarification depending on if you started working with the veteran before they were housed in HUD-VASH, all of those specifics. Just better to ask because it could be case by case. Always best to just double check with your GOTR for your program.

- [Steve]: I just like to add for SSVF clients that you're dealing with, they maintain their veteran homeless status, which is different from HUD-VASH. But absolutely, you know, to piggyback on Jenn, check with your GOTR for clarification around that if you have specific questions.

- [Jenn]: And it looks like there are two more hands raised. So, Emily, I'll go ahead and unmute you.

- [Shamika]: Hello, I'm not Emily. I'm Shamika. I had a question. If someone is staying in an Airbnb, would they be considered homeless?

- [Dr. Chambers]: Are they renting a long time? A short time rental, or month to month? We have people with month-to-month leases, and they are considered housed.

- [Shamika]: Okay.

- [Jenn]: And again with this one, sorry to jump in again. If this is a situation you have an experience, and you're not entirely sure how it fits into the eligibility criteria again, I would just check with your GOTR just to be safe. Run the current situation by them just to make sure you're treating it correctly.

And then last hand raised is Tanya. I'll go ahead and unmute you now. Tanya, did you still have a question? That answered the question, Tanya said.

So, if there aren't any other hands raised, we'll go ahead and keep moving. If you have questions, go ahead and write them in the chat or raise your hand, and we can unmute you or read your question out. So, we'll go ahead and keep going. Thank you again so much Dr. Chambers for your presentation today.

- [Dr. Chambers]: You're welcome. Thank you very much.

- [Jenn]: All right, so we wanted to hear from some of you all now. What are some of your effective job development strategies that your program uses? To share, you can either raise your hand again or you can type it in the chat, and I will read it out to everyone. It could be small tactics that you use that have been beneficial to your program, or it could be entire plans. Whatever you feel comfortable with or want to share, any thoughts?

- [Steve]: Yeah, I would like to just add, how are you actually going about connected with employers? I see there is a comment in the chat. Jenn, if you could go ahead and read it, that would be great.

- [Jenn]: Derek says, “While enrolling clients in the HVRP program, we cross refer them to the AJC where we enroll them into Detroit at Work and update their information through Michigan Works.” Fantastic example. I’m sure while those are local programs, those programs exist in a similar capacity and areas all over. So that’s a great example. Anyone else? Thank you for that, Derek. Okay, if there are no other thoughts on this, we’ll go ahead and keep moving,

I will turn it over to Sarah.

- [Sarah Chung]: Thank you so much, Jenn. I appreciate it. We are shifting gears a bit to job retention, and Dr. Chambers talked a lot about retention strategies. We’re going to just dive in a little bit deeper.

[Next Slide]: Job retention, as Dr. Chambers and Steve also talked about, is having clear expectations, right? Placing a veteran into employment doesn’t mean that the work is done. It’s really important that we dive into the expectations that the veteran has. What sorts of things are they expecting? But also, what sorts of things are in your capacity as the case manager or the employment specialist? What sorts of things are not in your capacity under HVRP?

We talked a lot just a moment ago about housing and those sorts of things. Some of those housing questions, maybe are not in your wheelhouse as the case manager for HVRP, because you are so laser-focused on the employment plans and those goals.

Next, preventing and planning is about building that rapport with the veterans, so that you know what some of those triggers are, or what some of those hiccups may be before they even happen. Sometimes a veteran can be challenged with the job placement, and you’re already ahead of the game. You already are anticipating some of these challenges because of the rapport that you have been building, and going back to that IEP and developing that alongside the veteran. You’ve already got your ear to the ground on some of those possible challenges.

Retention really is more than just checking in with the veteran, as Dr. Chamber said. It’s more than checking in and building rapport with the employer as well. It’s a systemic approach to supporting the veteran that begins, as Steve said, at outreach. That process is also really important to remember. That rapport-building is important also, of course, with the employer. You’ve got the support going on both sides.

When we talk about the IEP, we're talking about tracking that employment and those little steps along the way and celebrating those successes because having a job and keeping a job can be very stressful. And you're building that rapport with your veterans so that they can be honest with you about some of the challenges that they might be having around transportation, around trying to be on time, or those sorts of little things. When they open up to you about some of these more sensitive topics that they're really not as confident in, you can help them celebrate their successes along the way.

For example, if I'm a case manager and I'm talking to one of my veteran clients, I may say, "I know you've mentioned to me in the past that timeliness is a bit of a challenge for you, because you work across town. I've noticed you've been to work five minutes early for the last two months. That is excellent, I just want to say congratulations on that, because getting out of bed is really hard for anyone." So really, just taking the time, as Dr. Chamber said, to listen to that veteran and what they're saying to you because I know you're all pretty good at building rapport, and they're saying these things to you.

[Next Slide]: Clear expectations. This is a continuation combined with the job development process. Keeping that IEP as we talked about on Tuesday as a running document and defining specific placement expectations are essential for both the veteran and you as the case manager. What is their role, and what are their exact expectations about how much they would like to be paid? How much do they aspire to be paid? And really getting nitty gritty on those details. Asking the veteran, "When would you like to see yourself getting promotion? How much of a promotion are you looking to get?" Is that just salary, is that title, really helping that veteran to spell it out for you? Also keeping that ongoing support from personal supports, workplace supports, and program support as part of the conversation. What are their expectations around those sorts of things around their personal supports? What are their clear expectations around company culture? This really helps the continuation of building rapport because you're truly asking that veteran, "What do you think? What is important to you? What type of culture would you like to work in?"

For example, "You've mentioned that where you're working right now at a call center, you just don't feel heard, and there are not a lot of folks who have the same interest in you. What sort of goals do you have to move out of that situation into a company where the culture is more aligned with your values?" Really picking that veteran's brain along the way. And then, for the HVRP provider, for yourself, the veteran will provide salary information and pay stubs, and those are the sorts of things that you need to know per the grant and proactively contact the workplace if a workplace issue occurs. We're really dialing in on the expectations, not just from the veteran's perspective, but also from your perspective, as their caseworker, or as their employment specialist.

[Next Slide]: If you've attended some of the other Virtual Learning Courses, you'll see that there is some really important overlap that is happening. And this is on purpose because we're really trying to hone in for you a lot of these best practices. As we talked about on Tuesday around the IEP and job retention, this is really bringing it all together.

Knowing your veteran and knowing their stressors is important. Talking with that veteran about job-specific stressors that can be caused by people that might be triggering or tasks. For example, if there's a veteran, maybe they hurt their back or something, and the job calls for only about 10 pounds of lifting. But they're noticing that it's more like 50 pounds of lifting, and that's a really big trigger because they don't want to feel hurt and want to feel respected, just like all of us. Working with your veteran to role play possible conversations that they might need to have with their leadership around expectations, like we just talked about, but also preventing them from leaving the job prematurely because maybe some of those conversations might be difficult for them, as they are for all of us. Helping the veteran connect these stressors to specific workplace behaviors, actions that could lead to losing jobs, as I just said. So really trying to prevent some of that job hopping or quitting the job just by asking the questions that might be triggering them to help them. Role play scenarios to develop an action plan of coping strategies to address these behaviors. Using all their support and making sure that veteran knows that you're listening.

For example, "You mentioned that your best friend over here is Tom, and I hear you're going through a hard time because you experienced somebody being aggressive at your work. Why don't you give Tom a call. He seems like a really supportive guy."

"You're right. I should. I should give Tom a call. He always helps me calm down, absolutely."

Next, discuss possible ways to remove these stressors with the veteran. How to remove these stressors prior to starting work? I've been a case manager in my life, too, and one of my youth clients through the years would need to really help themselves when they were having anxiety attacks before entering certain workplace situations. Talking about some of these sorts of triggers can really help. One thing that this client that I was working with did, was they needed to walk around the block a couple of times before even entering the workplace. That sort of movement, and that intention really helped set the stage. "Okay, I've walked around the building three times, I'm ready. I'm walking in. I know that if I need to walk out, I can tell my boss I need to walk around the block." That sort of safe thing that my client could do to reset themselves and prepare for possible stressors within the workplace, and then reinforce that stress at work is a normal condition, right?

I think all of us who have worked in direct service, who work in any job at all, whether you're a case manager or work in a mechanic shop or whatever can be stressful. Things happen that we're not prepared for sometimes. So, reinforcing that work can be really stressful, and there are ways that we can help ourselves move through this stressful place and offering up some examples.

But of course, putting it back on the veteran: "What has helped you in the past work through some of these stressors? And oh, is that right? That's a really great idea. Why, don't you try to do some of that when you're feeling stressful next time?"

[Next Slide, Jenn]: We have a question in the chat before we move on, so I'll go ahead and read it. It says, "We are having trouble getting employers in Puerto Rico at above minimum wage. Is



there a list of organizations affiliated at your level in the range of \$14.50 an hour that provide services in Puerto Rico that we could reference for employment, contract, and job retention?”

- [Sarah]: That is an excellent question, and I think this could be a question for your GOTRs as well, because they've got a really good finger on the pulse. But also, your local AJC, if you've got an AJC. They're really good to reach out to, as well as community colleges. Community colleges have got a really great idea about above minimum wage type jobs. This is a really excellent question.

- [Jenn]: Yeah, and I think some other things you could utilize like we were talking about earlier just for your network of partnerships, you could analyze your local job data and wage data. Utilizing those existing partnerships in your community is important. And we have a hand raised as well. William, I'll go ahead and unmute you now.

- [Sarah]: Hello, William, how are you?

- [William]: I'm doing fantastic. I just wanted to reach out and touch base about some of these things. I saw that you were talking in a couple of previous slides about doing certain things like getting your veterans to understand what wages are, and things like that. Well, some of this kind of ties back even on Tuesday, where you discussed interviewing skills.

You set them up for how to do interview skills. And you're giving them interviewing questions and being able to have them understand that at the end of the interview, 90 percent of the people that are doing the interview ask, “Do you have anything else for us?” And if you come prepared with a handful of questions, or say, I suffer from this or that, it's not something you really want to ask all the time. We have those questions ready for them, and some of them are tough questions, and they don't always lead to a job. But if you're willing to be open and honest, I found that that works.

For the prevent and plan side of this, I found that if veterans are struggling, or they're having stressors at work, whether it's with management or with clients, with other co-workers or whatnot, I've always offered up, but I haven't had to do this yet. I've been around six, eight months now, doing this job, but I've offered mediation. “Hey, let me call your work and see if you, me, and your immediate supervisor can sit down, and we can discuss this. That way you have somebody on your side who understands what you going through, what you're dealing with, and who knows your story, and is willing to stand there and listen to what the issues are.” Whether it's issues that he's having, and he doesn't realize it, or whatever the case may be. We're able to sit and mediate and understand that there are things on both sides that need to be worked on, and that we try to figure that out to keep them employed as long as we can keep them employed. Having that open line of communication makes a drastic difference, and I think that having that option there might open up some of those problems that aren't so big.

The walking around the block is fantastic strategy. Things like this, but sometimes it just takes having the guts to go in and speak with your boss like you're not always terrified of all the things

that happened. Just having somebody on your side. Calling in your HVRP guy to come in and just sit with you is just as comforting. For example, I'll speak on his behalf, or I'll sit here and support you, and whatever he's got going on. What can we do to help him be better, or what can I do to help you as the employer to be better? To help understand what he's going through or whatnot, and I think that would make a drastic difference. What do you guys think?

- [Sarah]: That's such an excellent example, William, thank you. And that actually helps us segue into our next slide. And you're right, as a case manager, that advocacy role that you can play, of course, with the permission of your veteran, because sometimes it is hard to speak up.

I've been in situations where I've offered to advocate for a client who really felt like they were being bullied by their employer. There's been a case where the client took me up on it. "Yes, you know I would really love for you to call on my behalf." And then another time that I asked, "Would you like me to call and advocate for you. We can talk about some of the things that you mentioned around your anxiety or various triggers." The client said "No, no, no, Sarah, that would embarrass me. Do not do that." I think really offering to be that advocate with their permission, is very powerful.

There are some things that might be really hard for them to talk about, and you can be that bridge. You can be that mediator. So that was an excellent example. And so, to go along that, in tracking the employment and tracking the little successes. Beyond emphasizing that HVRP, of course, provides post-placement and follow-up, an HVRP participant is expected to provide employment information and to consider, as Dr. Chamber said, follow up directly with that employer, via email, phone, or site visit.

Having that relationship and continuing building that report, not just with your veteran, but with that employer is crucial. As Jenn said earlier, it really helps them for any time that they might have an employment opening, where they remember you. They remember that you were somebody who really does advocate for your veterans and that you've got some great people that that are willing to work hard and are going to be great for a possible position that might be open for them.

Also connecting with family, friends, and workplace colleagues, if applicable. Being that all this is veteran centered, it's, of course, best to get their permission. "Is it okay if I connect with your family or with your friends?" Then via direct email. That's always kind of a nice, just a quick check in. Just, "How are things going? Any challenges? No? Great. Excellent." And then develop a peer support group at the HVRP site for working veterans. These are important techniques that can be considered. This will also help to continue your work around identifying potential barriers. Then provide that ongoing support.

[Next Slide]: This is a perfect slide for me because I tend to be kind of an optimistic cheesy person. Celebrating successes is being their cheerleader, and acknowledging these achievements might seem small to them, but they're actually really huge, especially when they add up. And

there's something very valuable about seeing those small celebrations and celebrate those small successes, even on paper.

That's why things like the IEP are such good tools in your wheelhouse as a case manager and as an employment specialist, so that you can celebrate those successes with them. It's also an opportunity for everybody to celebrate. Not just the veteran, not just you, but their other supports as well. Other ideas around helping them to recognize their success, if you've got it in your budget, are providing lunch or dinner for working veterans. Being able to either enjoy a meal with them, if that seems like something that you'd like to do within your own boundaries of working. Or have you got some lunch vouchers, or gift cards, or something like that? "Hey, I noticed that you have been on time every single week for a month. You love your coffee. So here's a Starbucks gift card. I just really want to tell you that you're doing a great job." You know those little things, letting them know, like Dr. Chamber said, that you are paying attention. Celebrating and showcasing a wall of photos of working veterans in an area where everyone can see. People love to see themselves on the wall sometimes. But other times, people don't, so of course, asking them permission to post, if you've got a great picture, and they've signed a photo release.

All of those ideas only really help them to feel successful and worthy, but it can also inspire their colleagues and their friends who might also be veterans in the program. Then asking employed veterans to attend agency events, finding ways to incentivize them for their time and success stories right from the veteran is very powerful. We've learned that word of mouth is the best tool for marketing and for sharing how good something is going in their lives. If you've got an event that's coming up, and you'd like to showcase a veteran who has done a really great job, and is doing really well for themselves, showcasing them in an event. And being sure that you are providing an incentive for their valuable time and for their story is important. Acknowledging too, that sometimes these stories, from your viewpoint might seem great. But there are a lot of challenges that they haven't shared with you. Sharing can be a challenge as well.

[Next Slide]: I am going to hand it back over to Jenn.

- [Jenn]: Thanks, Sarah. We just wanted to open it up for you all to hear some of your ideas and thoughts and some things that are working in your program. So, first question we have here:

How are you supporting veterans post placement?

And again, if you want to share, go ahead, and either raise your hand, and I'll unmute you or type it in the chat, and I'll read it out to everyone. We do have a hand raised. William, I'll go ahead and unmute you.

- [William]: What I found is with our program, when we get veterans hired, we have that 30-day window to do certain things with them and whatnot. That's pretty standard. After that, if they change jobs, they do other things like that. What I try to do is try to find resources for them anyway, shape, form, fashion.

So, you know what clients are needing. You know what client's car broke down. "Oh, hey, perfect, I've got this opportunity. If you want to come into the office, we can fill out this grant paperwork. I can refer you over here if you need this to be done," or maybe they need a bike. "Oh, hey, there's a resource over here on the other side of town. If you get a couple of dollars to buy a bike clock, they can give you a bike for free." Or it's just being able to know your outsourcing resources to help them continue where they need to go. If they've lost their job, then we just jump right back in, and we start looking for work. We try to find them the best opportunities we can find.

- [Jenn]: Those are great examples, thank you so much, William. And we also have a couple in the chat as well. So we have Misty. It says, "Gas cards, bus passes, donated items for housing." Fantastic ideas.

Then "Following up every 30 days to ensure they are still hired or may need any other resources." That's a great one.

So, "Keeping up with them, keeping in contact with them, making sure that the placement stuck that they're still successfully employed. Just letting them know you're still there." That's fantastic.

Jennifer said in the chat, "We do weekly checks with the veterans until they are comfortable with the jobs. We also will provide gas or bus passes to get them through until their first paycheck, getting them work." Those are great ideas as well. You know the transition into starting a new job before you're comfortable can be rough, so letting them know that you're there for support. Helping them with the resources they need. Those are great examples.

And we do have another question for you all. "What are some ways that you celebrate employment and success?" And again, either raise your hand or type it in the chat. Whatever you feel more comfortable with.

I love this suggestion. "We have a wall of heroes with their picture at the job place." So, this is similar to what Sarah was saying earlier. It seems like such a simple thing, but it's really impactful. I love that idea. Any other ideas of some creative strategies you all have used?

William says, "We have a job board where we go to the vet's worksite and take photos and post them up as a motivational wall." So, it seems like this is a popular idea. I love it. Anyone else?

So, I'm not seeing other hands raised or any new chats. Oh, one more. "We send birthday cards and congratulations cards for graduating the program." Another fantastic touch. Showing the veteran that you're paying attention, that you care that you're still there for support. Love that idea.

We want to open it up now for any questions, comments, and any additional thoughts about anything we discussed today.

Also, at the same time, while you guys are thinking of any questions, we are going to be posting a survey for today's session in the chat. If you have a couple of minutes just to fill that out, we would love to hear from all of you. Dr. Chambers, go ahead.

- [Dr. Chambers: We also have a tech for that program here where we have a nonprofit that donated 14 desktops to us. So, if we encountered veterans that may not have one at home but want to do some virtual trainings or work on their resume or something like that, we will loan them a laptop to take with them. We also were able to give out free telephones for a while with SSVF. They were enrolled in both programs and did not have a cell phone. We provide them with a free cell phone. So that's another way to help them to get going.

- [Jenn]: I love that. You know it's hard to do so many of these activities if you don't have the access to do it, right? If you don't have that laptop, if you don't have a cell phone. So, getting the veterans connected is such a critical piece of this. I love that. William also has his hand raised.

- [William]: To bounce off what the doctor noted, like free phones, the state of Oregon is still enrolled with various programs like cricket mobile and a few others in this area here in Eugene. We worked it out where they do that, and they work through the grant that gives away a phone and 30-days service to all the veterans that don't have phone service. We also have local groups, like Lions Club or other groups like that have a handful of people that go in, and they find used laptops, repair them, and then give them away for little to no cost. Literally, whatever the cost might be. It's a battery, so we want twenty-five bucks. Well, 25 bucks for a \$250 laptop is not a bad deal. And they're up and working, and they're all good to go, and we give them a card, and they can reach out for tech questions or whatever. Or if there's a repair that needs to be done or something's not correctly working right, they can reach back out that way, too. There are all sorts of little things we've stumbled upon the last little while, as we're still growing and trying to make those connections. But there are lots of tech companies out here. They're willing to go, "Hey, we'll build you a laptop if you're willing to fill out these forms and do a little bit of paperwork and just put a little effort into it," and nine times out of ten, the vets are rewarded for just putting an extra ten minutes of work. And they get a laptop, a computer, a cell phone, a tablet, or whatever they might need to help them get that little bit of extra internet access. Or have another way of being able to communicate with people, whether it's email or Messengers of some sort, WhatsApp, or whatever the case might be.

- [Jenn]: Thank you, William, another great tech resource. We all know how important having access to technology is so important. Thank you for sharing. Anyone else? The survey link has been posted in the chat as well. I don't see any new hands raised.

Thank you all so much for attending today. Thank you, Dr. Chambers, for joining us. We hope that you got a lot of out of this session series. And if you have any questions, our email is up on the screen as well: [contact@nvtac.org](mailto:contact@nvtac.org). If you have any questions or if you want technical assistance feel free to reach out to that email. Thank you all so much, and have a great rest of your day.

- [Dr. Chambers]: Thank you all.