

## Job Search and Training Virtual Learning Course (VLC) Transcript

- [Sarah Chung]: Like I said, I am Sarah Chung. I am a coach for the NVTAC team. You've probably met my wonderful colleagues Steve Dudasik and Jenn Steigerwald, who are also on this call. They're both coaches for the NVTAC team. So, I'm sure if you have not met me, you've met and have been working with them. So, let's just dive right in.

Just to give you a little background on who I am and why I'm even here teaching you anything. I come from a direct service background. I have worked in an emergency shelter. I've worked in transitional housing. I've been a homeless outreach worker. I have supervised a transitional housing program. I have worked many years with the LGBTQ youth population as well as veterans who are experiencing homelessness and families. So, I come with that direct service background. I also do some work on the correlation between those experiencing homelessness and also being exploited due to sex trafficking. So, I bring that with you here, and I'm sure you'll be able to tell throughout my presentation that I'm quite passionate about service provision and really just helping with that wraparound care, which is definitely one of the topics on this VLC today. So, let's just move right along.

So, what is the NVTAC role? So basically, we are technical assistance providers that are designed to truly and specifically help you out as the HVRP grantee through your whole period of performance. And really, our job is to ensure that as challenges arise, as I know specifically working for the nonprofit world myself, that they will... that we help you to resolve them as quickly as possible. To ensure that there is not a hiccup in your performance and to just help you move as quickly through challenges as possible. So, we really are here to be the ear and listen to any innovative best practices that come up so that we can share them not only with yourselves but with the federal staff as well. And so, like I said, we are the technical expertise to the federal staff. So, we're hearing from you all what's working, what's not working, some challenges, some innovative best practices, and that sorts of information really help to assist in policy development, oversight, and strategic planning for future periods of performance through HVRP. So, we really are here to listen to lessons learned, challenges that might come up, and of course, innovative best practices that we're always very excited to share.

And so, being that this topic is job search and training, we are going to dive right into the IEP. And I'm sure you're all very familiar with the Individual Employment Plan. And so, the IEP is crucial to the success of the veteran and their employment goals through HVRP. This tool is developed collaboratively with yourself, whether you're a case manager or you are an employment specialist, and with that veteran. So, this is not a stagnant document at all. This document is very flexible, and it really helps to identify and lay out strategies for helping that veteran achieve their employment goals. So, that includes large goals really broken down into small bite-size pieces that are manageable, that are not intimidating for that veteran, and very specific timelines that really help the veteran to feel comfortable.

And so, let's dive a bit deeper into the elements of an IEP. And so, I'm sure that you all have an IEP, whether you've developed it yourself through your own organization or we've got some really nice templates on our [nvtac.org](http://nvtac.org) website as well that you can customize for your own needs. And so, the goal really is to gather as much information as you can from that veteran on what their vision is because I think some of us might assume that a veteran might have a goal in mind, might already know that "I want to work at this place. I want to make that much money." But we shouldn't assume, right? Because that veteran might not have a clear vision of what their specific employment goals are. And so, an IEP really helps both that veteran and you as the case worker or employment specialist to pinpoint exactly how this plan is going to go. So, some of the goals and information you're trying to gather are what is the industry that that veteran is excited to be part of? What type of occupation, what type of job? You know, what location might that veteran really like to work in? Is it right down the street from where they're staying or living? Are they interested in a hybrid work setting, remote, or something more in-person? Do they even know what that hybrid setting is? That's sort of a newer term here in the last couple of years due to COVID. What are their salary goals? How much money would they like to make? And what type of work is it? Is it full-time or part-time? When is that target start date? When would they like to be in that position? That's really part of the key elements that we're going to dive into as we get going here.

And so, continuing on through these elements of an IEP, it's important for you as the case worker or employment specialist to kind of just understand that baseline, right? What sorts of skills and foundational knowledge does that veteran come in with? And then, can that also help you decide if there are other wraparound services that might really help them be better suited for the type of job that they're seeking? Do they have basic math skills? Are they okay with reading? Do they need assistance to go down line by line of an application? These sorts of things. How are their time management skills? How financially literate are they? I think a lot of these things can be challenging for the veteran as they're challenging for us, right, as their case worker, as their employment specialist. It's really important to get a basic education baseline so that you can see what kinds of supports could be very helpful for them. As my colleague last Thursday for the Virtual Learning Course talked about in a little more detail, motivational interviewing is a wonderful technique that you can use that will kind of help organically pull these sorts of answers out of the veteran in a way that doesn't seem scary or pushy. We also do have a motivational interviewing course that you can find on our NVTAC website that can go into more detail about that sort of strategy. And so, let's just move right along into the next one here, skills training.

So, these questions that we have up here are questions that you, as the case worker, as the employment specialist, are asking yourself, right? So, what skills does the veteran have.... And so, what skills did the job career require? And how will that veteran get them? And so, when you get that sort of baseline understanding (like the next slide shows), what sorts of skills when you're really trying to figure out the goal with that veteran, what sorts of skills do they require, and how can that veteran get them? For example, let's say your veteran is really interested in mechanics. They love the idea of working on cars; they do a little bit on their own; they help

their friends; that's what they did in the army. You know, those sorts of things really excite that veteran. It's really important for you as the case worker or employment specialist to understand what skills that veteran will even need to even be a success at that job, but also be able to apply for that job and have that mechanic shop even look at that veteran as a possible candidate for the job. And so, what skills do the job or career require, and how will the veteran get them? And so this part of the IEP really is making sure that you're writing down for that veteran or having the veteran do it every single little step that it takes, and we're going to go into more detail on that.

And so housing, it's really important that you, as the HVRP case worker or employment specialist, are laser-focused on that employment goal. But there are also things that the veteran might be needing right now that can help them be more successful. Yes, you're laser-focused on those employment goals. But housing is something that's very important, I think, for the case worker to bring up, for there to be some serious talks because that's when we really go into partnerships, which will be a topic down the road a little bit. But you know, ask yourself what sorts of housing options are available, and how will that veteran access them? Is the veteran connected to housing supports or a housing program? What sorts of housing opportunities are out there, and making sure that that veteran is plugged into them, right? I've been a case worker, and I think that there's a misconception in the field that says, "Oh, you know you've got to take care of your housing goals before you have employment, or you've got to handle your mental health challenges before you get into housing, before you get into employment." And actually, that's false. It's really important that we help the veteran to understand that you can do all of these things at the same time, and you should be doing them all at the same time. And so, I think it's important that, as it was talked about at the last VLC on Thursday, we're the cheerleaders for these veterans that we work with. If they have housing goals, even though you specifically are laser-focused on the employment piece, it's important that you have a really good grasp on what is out there so that you can refer them out to those supports for housing. Let's go right along to supportive services.

And so, the first goal of the IEP, of course, is to address employment barriers, develop that goal, and really hone in. But it's important that we look at other supportive services. What other services are required to address this veteran's barriers? So, when we talk about our employment goals, when we talk about various other services that would help them to be successful, is that including any type of goals around health care or treatment with substance use? Or, are they in need of clothing for the specific job that they would really like? Are they in need of any legal services? And your job is really to figure out how you can connect them to those services. And believe me, I know, as a caseworker in my past, I wanted to wear all the hats. I wanted to, and specifically, I was a case manager for housing, and so I wanted to be that end-all-be-all, right? Because when you care about your client, which I know you all do, you want to address all of those challenges. But I realized very quickly that I could really only do what I could do, which was housing, but I could connect them to other services for those other things that they needed, such as employment and mental health. And so, in this instance, you're laser-focused on the employment plan. So how are you going to connect your veterans to other services that will really help them to be successful? And with that, it's important that when you are making

connections with other service providers in other areas that you don't cover under HVRP, you're in really great contact with those other case managers, with those other social service workers. And of course, a need for a release of information when talking specifically about a client is necessary, and making sure that release of information is up to date is also very crucial because a lot of information that can be shared could be very private or sensitive. We want to make sure, of course, that it's client-led, that the veteran is okay with you talking with another service provider, and that they're okay with you talking about the contents. There might be some things that they're talking to you about that are, you know, a little traumatic or touchy, and they really would prefer you not share that information. So, it's good to let the veteran, of course, lead how much they would like for there to be discussed.

And so, job, search. So how will the veteran identify and apply for relevant positions? So, it's very important that you come up with concrete goals and really document them. So, for example, let's say the veteran says, I will apply for five jobs on Monday, six jobs on Tuesday, seven jobs on Wednesday, eight jobs, and so on and so on. They're going to take Saturday and Sunday off from applying. So, those are really concrete goals, but more so, you're going a layer deeper, right? So not only am I going to apply for five jobs on Monday, but I'm going to apply for five gas station jobs on Monday between Van Buren and Beasley Street or what have you. And so, getting as bite-size as you can on these goals for the IEP is so important. You know, specific days that you need to drill down. I will apply for 15 jobs by October 31st in the area of, you know, mechanics, shops, or whatever. So, this is really helpful to get down and drill down so that they can track their success right alongside you. I think that job searching can be really intimidating for all of us. I know that, even us on the other side, as a case manager. It's stressful when you're looking for a job. And so, I think we can oftentimes feel a bit overloaded and stressed just with the big goal. So, I think it's important just to be as tedious as we can, drill down on those specifics so that we can see our progress, the progress of the veteran, as we go. And so, this is a little bit more onto that idea, starting small because the more we drill down smaller, we can see successes. And it's very important that we're tracking those tiny goals just to really help with self-esteem and keep that momentum up because breaking down goals into smaller, more easily accomplished components leads to early successes and ultimately builds confidence. I think every single one of us on this VLC right now listening in can attest to that, right? We have to pat ourselves on the back as we go, and we know how to do that. And so, we can absolutely do that for the veteran because that's what they need. They need us to help build them up. Something really wonderful that was mentioned at last Thursday's VLC was just about the energy we bring to the job every day. We all definitely have our own lives, and we're all going through our own things. But the veteran picks up on our energy, right? And so, it's important, as one of the grantees said last Thursday. It's important that we leave our stuff at the door, right, and that's easier said than done. I get it. But I've been there. I've been there as a case manager going through my own stuff, and that veteran will absolutely pick up on our energy if we're not doing so well. And so, it's important that we try to leave as much as we can at the door and just be their cheerleader and really help them to celebrate every single small success. Even if that was, "I only immediately had a goal of two jobs per day, Sarah, but I actually got three jobs per day. And I just didn't think I had it in me." Like, "Wow! That is amazing. I'm so proud of you

because applying for one job is hard work, and you did three!” And so, it really comes from an authentic place to congratulate these small successes with the veteran.

So, providing and promoting accountability... so including timelines that we talked about and really set expectations about what needs to get done, timelines, when... that allows not only the veteran but the case manager to check that progress and hold each other accountable. I heard someone say one of the last VLCs that they don't say as a case manager, “I'm in this 50%. You're in this 50%. We're going to meet in the middle.” The caseworker said that they're in this 100%, and they challenge the veteran to be in at 100%. And so, when the veteran maybe is having a hard day, that case manager will pick up the slack for that veteran and carry them along with some of that positive energy. And so, you know, it's important. And that's exactly why, in an IEP, both people sign. The veteran signs at the end of those goals, and so do the caseworkers because you're holding each other accountable. “Hey, veteran, I'm the case worker in this case. Hey, veteran, you said you were going to apply to 20 jobs last week. How many jobs did you apply for?” “Well, I only really got 13.” “Okay. What were some of the challenges that came up? When you got that 20?” “Well, you know I kind of got busy. My dog got sick. I had to find a vet. You know, just things came... things came up. Okay?” “Well, you know, let's try again. Let's figure out what we can do to get you to that goal.” So, it really is about being a coach for that, for that veteran. And so, one thing I'd like to ask you all if you would take a moment to unmute yourself, or add in the chat for this one, or... how do you promote accountability with your veterans? I would love to know. Anybody, raise your hand. I know that this can definitely be a challenge as an employment specialist or as a caseworker. But how do you promote that accountability with your veteran? How do you inspire that? How do you? How do you keep them wanting to come back to you to fill you in on how they're doing? I would love at least one or two examples.

- [Jenn Steigerwald]: And Sarah, we do have a hand raised, so I'm going to go ahead and unmute William.

- [Sarah]: Thank you. Hi, William! William, I don't hear you. Are you there? I still don't hear you, William. Are you here?

- [William]: There you go! You hear me now?

- [Sarah]: Oh, yes, Hi, William!

- [William]: There you go. Sorry I had to switch over mics. That's all. I apologize. So how I'm doing? Fantastic! I'm glad to hear you guys are doing well. When I'm promoting a vet, or I'm trying to promote and encourage them in all ways, shapes, fashions, and forms, I'm having honest discussions with them at the beginning, and it starts when you're doing enrollment in our program. In our program, we have a set of rules. We sit down, and we have basically a client cooperative agreement, and we lay out what I can provide for you. And then, I also ask what you can provide for me on this piece of paper, and I lay it out and explain it to them. “These are the things I can do for you. In turn, this is what I need you to do for me,” and I keep reinforcing that.

And go, “Well, if you do this, I can get you here, here, and here. Can you finish that this week? Can you get this done? Fantastic! I’m glad you came in this week. I’m glad you got these things done. I’m glad you got all this work done. Can I get you to do this little bit more for me? Can I get you to go see this gentleman here? He’s going to be able to help you out with this process or that process, or we’re ready to job search. Here’s your resume. Take a look over it. When you’re done with it, if there’s something you’d like changed, let me know, and we’ll make those changes.” We’ll make that assessment. We’ll decide maybe that should be worded differently, or maybe we should leave that line out, engage them and make them have it to where they feel that they have choices. They don’t necessarily have to have choices at that point, especially if you’re trying to get them and keep them on the straight and narrow. But make it sound like they have choices, and they do, and they do end up having choices because they have to make those choices, whether they come in or not, whether to take this advice or not, do those things or not, they have those choices, but make it sound like they have extra choices, so then they’re thinking. They’re critically thinking. They’re trying to get the ability to do that. And then you’re building trust, rapport, just by following through on simple things. “Hey, I can have your resume done by this date.” Well, have it done a couple of days before. Give them a call or send them an email. “Hey! Your resume is done. I’m looking forward to seeing you on this date, or hey, I’m trying to get this done.” I think that’s the best way to go about it.

- [Sarah]: Oh, wow! William, that is such a wonderful example. What you’re saying is that you’re basically giving them a menu of choices, and that is such an amazing best practice that I will happily share with other grantees. “Here is the list of things that I can provide for you.” I’d like to see the list of things you were going to do, meeting in the middle. That is such a wonderful best practice, and you’re right. It allows that veteran to feel in control, whereas maybe in many other areas in their life, they feel like they don’t have control. Maybe they’re staying at a shelter or places where there are some pretty serious rules. This really allows them to feel in control, and that is a wonderful example, William. Thank you so much for sharing that. Is there any other example that someone would like to share? We can do one more. How do you promote accountability with your veterans? Any examples you’d like to share, please?

- [Jenn]: Sarah, we do have another hand, so I’ll go ahead and unmute Michelle.

- [Michelle]: Just going along with what William said. Making the veteran feel invested. We do several things when they first come in. We get a host of... we have resource events. We let them know from the beginning that we’re invested in this. We talk to them when we’re creating the plan, making sure that these are their goals and not just what we want them to do, making sure that we have invested in that. And then once a veteran gets the job, we let the multi-monthly events... We have those veterans come back and share with their peers how they got the job. How did they feel during this process? And we use incentivizing the veteran to promote what they’re doing so far. It may be just as simple as a \$2 thing, personal hygiene stuff, prizes for things that they do. And if they come to group classes five days out, three days out of the five or two days out of it, we got that you showed up on time, that’s really good. We may have and give them a little something. It doesn’t have to be anything major. I save up things from resource fairs, different things, and just make them feel special and that we’re invested in them. And they

start investing in themselves, building the courage to let them know how we go, and they keep in touch with you because now they're calling you to tell you what's going on. They're trying to find out when the next fantastic Friday event is. These are monthly events that we do for the older veterans and the new veterans, where they share with each other. They share common resources, and they always learn a lot. And that makes them keep coming back, which is required. However, they just feel like they're helping somebody.

- [Sarah]: Oh, my goodness! You mentioned so many great best practices right there. Thank you so much, Michelle. What an amazing way to kick off excitement within your veterans, to house an event. And you're doing monthly events, getting everyone excited. But you also mentioned incentives, right? Incentivizing, helping them to feel special, letting them know that you are paying attention and that you're really excited about their success. And also, you mentioned something very important too, Michelle. The importance in the power of word of mouth, right? So, our outreach strategies can consist of so many different things, marketing brochures, this and that, email blasts. But word of mouth is by far the most important piece of outreach. And so those are some amazing best practices that you just shared, Michelle. Thank you so much. Let's go right along, and there will be a couple more questions as we go. So, if you do have things to share at the very end, too, we'll have some time.

Okay. So, building buy-in. A lot of what the two folks who just shared talked about was really about that buy-in, right? Really helping them to feel invested in their plan because it is a collaborative process that, as I said at the beginning, really needs to ensure that those goals are flexible. So, if something comes up, whether it be a success or maybe a challenge, that IEP can be changed. It can be updated. And so, we really need that veteran to feel invested in the plan, right, and much like Michelle just said, feeling invested in the plan, but also understanding that we are paying attention, that you are watching their successes, that you're there for them as they're going through challenges. And it will help them also to demonstrate their commitment to the plan, but also, being that you're both signing—the case worker is signing, as well as the veteran signing—it's really allowing that veteran, as was mentioned before, to take control of the process. Right? This is their process. That they are the ones leading this. These are their goals. So really, it helps them to have some skin in the game, right? And in a world where maybe they feel that they don't have a lot of choices, or there are so many rules at the shelter that they're staying in or this or that. It really helps them to invest in their own success. And so, let's just move right along.

Connecting with partners. This is probably one of my most favorite slides because I know very well, being a case worker in my past, like I said before, we want to wear all the hats, right? If we're working with a veteran on their employment goals, we're laser-focused on that, but if we understand that they've been sleeping on the streets, we might want to help them with that, right? But that maybe isn't in our wheelhouse, so that would be a great referral out. So, veterans, as you know, might be working with multiple partners to assist not just with their job goals but also addressing other barriers. And so, we talked a little bit about earlier on the slides, that release of information being a critical need for when you are establishing a relationship with another partner, just to make sure that you're not duplicating services. But really, the more, the merrier,

you know? Being that I've worked for nonprofits before, I understand that we can get kind of competitive, right? It's easy to get in a silo within your own organization, and I know at one point, when I was a case manager, my nonprofit was a bit smaller, and there were other larger nonprofits that were able to be the coordinated entry sites through the local continuum of care, as I'm sure that you're all very familiar with. And so, for a long time, I tried to get the site that I was working at to be a coordinated entry site, but we just didn't have the bandwidth. We didn't have the staff to manage it. We didn't have the time to do the full-on assessment. So, I really had to think outside of the box. I had to connect with my partners, so I found another nonprofit that worked with youth, that was a mobile, coordinated entry site, and I asked them as a best practice, "Would you mind setting up shop at our job and center once or twice a week, entering those youth into the HMIS, the homeless management information system, so that they can see if they qualify for the housing vouchers that are available in our area?" And so, that was me getting out of my silo, and utilizing the expertise of my community partners, so that really worked out well. And you know, without the help of the coordinated entry provider that came in twice a week, not a lot of youth would have been able to get that housing. And so that's a great example of how we can really connect with our partners and utilize their expertise when maybe we don't have the staff bandwidth to do that.

And so work settings. 2022, of course, has opened up a lot of different types of work settings, and one thing that I quickly realized as a case manager is that I should never assume, right? Even though I might be living in this virtual world when I get home, and I'm privileged enough to have wi-fi, these sorts of things that keep me posted. You know, a lot of folks may not truly and deeply understand what this hybrid virtual setting is all about. And so, it's important for us to really talk about what it is. Hybrid settings are going to require strong wi-fi. Wi-fi could run anywhere between \$50 to \$130 a month by these providers, and you're going to need a good computer that can be hooked up to the Wi-fi. When we're creating our IEPs with the veterans, it's important that we really break down exactly what those sorts of things are too. "Veteran, do you want to work in a hybrid environment? That's one of your goals. Well, then, let's go ahead and put down on your IEP that you're going to need to get a computer, and you're going to need to have reliable transportation to this Starbucks over here so that you can get into their wi-fi. You know, those sorts of problem-solving... And, of course, there are the in-person settings that will require reliable transportation. Perhaps you and your HVRP division don't have bus passes or things like that. Is there a partner that you can work with within your region that might have bus cards or access to Ubers, or whatever it might be? You know, really thinking outside of the box, as you're helping veterans to establish their goals.

[Next Slide]: Job-driven trainings, or the JDT. It's a strategy for connecting workers with the training that they need to meet the demands of the current labor market. So, it really ensures that the veteran's interests and their preferences are the basis for receiving the training that provides the skills necessary to get that job that they're currently seeking but being real with them about the types of jobs that are available right now. "This goal that you have about, you know, being a trapeze artist, I think it's super awesome. But if you're wanting to stay in town, where there is not like a trapeze studio, do you know what kind of jobs in town (because that was your goal, to stay



in town) are available that you might also be interested in?” You know, using motivational interviewing techniques to kind of get around some of these goals. What is Job-Driven Training? It is designed to solve three common challenges. Employers who are struggling to find skilled workers to fill vacancies. Second, training programs that do not always match the skills required for in-demand jobs. And then third, workers lacking information about training resources. So JDT comes in a variety of forms, from classroom training to experience-based opportunities such as apprenticeships or on-the-job trainings. And we're going to go into more detail on that in some of these next slides.

So, training with a purpose. So, training should be based on the veteran's interest, right? As Michelle mentioned, led by the veteran's goals—what they're interested in, what they prefer. Balance that against the real talk and the realities of the local employment market, right? So, you're asking yourself as a case worker, as an employment specialist, “Will the training provide skills or certification, or other credentials connected to the actual job goal in which that veteran has interest in?” That's the hard part, and I know even myself that I was guilty of this as a case manager. You know, you go into your local Target, or your local sandwich shop, or where wherever, and you see help wanted, and that's what you tell, that's what you tell your client. I know you really want to be a mechanic, but Target is hiring right now at like \$16 an hour. Why don't you start there? I mean, I've been guilty of saying that, and as much as we want to say that, we can just offer it up. “While you're getting some of your trainings or your certifications, if you wanted to start at Target, that might not be a bad route to go.” But you should probably understand that the veteran might say, “No, I do not want to wear that red polo. I do not want to work at Target. No, thank you.” So, it really is about weighing and balancing their interests with the real talk about the current job market. So, I would like to open it up to you all. Do you have any examples of JDT processes that you're utilizing as a best practice right now? Please feel free to unmute yourself or raise your hands. So, any job-driven training examples or processes that you folks would like to share? Will you? We can share it. Two of them, please.

- [Jenn]: We have a hand raised. So, I'll go ahead and unmute William.

- [William]: Hi! I'm back again. So, when I'm doing job development training, we're finding that this is one of those things that our office was lacking. So, we're trying to figure out how to develop a plan, so we've developed a plan to adjust the way we look at things and how we adjust. So, what we do is we get them enrolled. We do their IEP, and while we're asking all these pertinent questions about their IEP, we should be making side notes or making an excel spreadsheet. Keeping out okay, what is their goal, what is their end goal job that they really want to do? What kind of training do they need? Can we keep it inside a couple of weeks? Can we do it in a couple of days? Or is this something where I've got to send you off for six weeks to go... say, if he wants a CDL or something along those lines. Those are the things we have to adjust and guide for. So, I've got a couple of clients right now who just need certifications renewed. They need a license renewed. Well, to do that, let's get on that. Let's get those certifications done. Let's get that done and knocked out. While you're doing that, that gives me time to type up your resume. And so, when you pass your certifications, get your certifications, and bring me the certificate, I can add that to the bottom of your resume in the certificates area. And then, all of a

sudden, I have this nice resume ready to go, and you're ready to start your job search. And it's all set up kind of in a nice, neat bundle between the IEP and the resume. Or you have them job searching. You kind of have them picking at the base, seeing what's out there, and getting engaged. Meanwhile, they're doing a little bit of training, and they've got that homework that somebody suggested last week going. You give them some homework. Find out where or what fields are really involved with what that training is in, or maybe we suggest a different kind of training. That might be the way to go. So, that's what we use, and that's what I use.

- [Sarah]: Thank you so much again, William, for providing some wonderful best practices. Absolutely, taking side notes. Your IEP is just one document, but side notes on various certifications that they might want or need. Or do they need to get their license, like you said, or their state ID, those sorts of things? And you're right. I think this whole process can be very overwhelming, as it is for us. Right, when and if we look for jobs, our personal selves. And so, William, you're so right that we can help to inspire by doing these things together, right? Like, while William is busting out the resume and making that look real pretty, homework is being done by the veteran in these areas. So, then you've got that beautiful package, and how wonderful that feels to the veteran to have their goals, but also their resume, and they are ready to go. Like that is such a great feeling, so thank you so much for sharing that best practice and, of course, the homework piece, right? We want them to feel invested, and we want them to feel successful throughout the whole process. And so, they need homework. They crave homework. They want that even if they say they don't like homework. Just don't call it that. Giving them the initiative to do things on their own. And we have one other person who can give an example of the JDT process. Does anybody have a great process that they'd like to share around job-driven training? Any examples? Okay, that's quite all right. I don't take offense.

So, next, the stepping stones and career pathways. And so, this is really great, when we talked about sort of those bite-sized steps, right? The first position that the veteran takes in their transition from homelessness is usually not like, I'm going to get a career job, right? Maybe it is. I've actually worked with quite a few clients that really were like, I know, I just got into transitional housing, but I really want to be the IT specialist, and I know that salary comes in at about \$60,000. And that's where I want to go. So, you do have those clients and those veterans who will say that. But ongoing job-driven training provides the skills and experience needed for them to get to that stepping stone, to get to that goal. This is career pathing, right? Career pathing is the process of aligning opportunities and helping to map out the process of growth where that it's going to take to get to that career job that they would really like. For example, if your veteran would like to work at a mechanic shop as the supervisor, those are going to take some stepping stones to get there. It'd probably be best to start out working at Discount Tire, or a place that can get your foot in the door, and have something great on your resume so that when you do approach that mechanic shop that you've been having your eye on to work for years, you've got some things on the resume and under your belt that will be more impressive to them. So, it's really important that we help with that career pathing process.

And so, of course, the individualized approach. This has been mentioned throughout. William mentioned it. Michelle mentioned it. It being that this approach is client-focused, right? And so, it

is easy for us as the case worker to say, “Hey, Target over here, they have a ton of jobs. Will you please just apply there?” So, it's easy for us just to place a veteran right, but that isn't their decision, and we don't want to take the control away from them. So, it needs... the placement needs to be based on their employment goal. And then the IEP, right? You specifically mentioned what their goals are in the IEP. The placement has to follow that, right? And so, you ask yourself, as the case worker, as the employment specialist, does the training provide necessary skills, experience, or insight that would benefit the veteran's career development? Is the veteran emotionally, physically, or mentally ready to engage in that training? When we talk about those wraparound services, it's important that we do things together. So, we're laser-focused on their employment goals. But also, maybe they're working with another housing provider here on the side, and maybe they're working with another mental health provider on this side. And so, all those things can happen at once. That's really important, too. As I mentioned before, it's great for you to have that release of information with the permission of the veterans so that you can make sure all that coordination of care is happening in a streamlined way.

And so, implementing the strategies continued. So, training that includes the on-the-job component that helps a veteran to learn the new skills is just a wonderful, wonderful thing because not only are they learning as they go, but they're getting paid to do that. So, apprenticeships are an excellent opportunity to do that on the job. Say that your veteran is really interested in HVAC, right? I've seen so many commercials as of late on-the-job training. You get paid as you train. These sorts of things really help because not only can it instill a lot of excitement and motivation in that veteran, but also they're getting paid. They're getting paid to learn, which is awesome.

So, let's just move right along. So, these are some different strategies. Of course, working with your American Job Centers. We're going to talk more about that a little bit later in the presentation. Community colleges are an amazing partner. They've got a large number of resources, whether it's an employment board or they've got employment specialists. And you don't even have to be enrolled in the college to access a lot of the services apprenticeship opportunities like I mentioned, something like the HVAC or you want to be an ironworker apprenticeship or something like that. And then employer networks and so employer networks can provide trainings and information and guidance to help recruit and train and engage and retain really good workers. So, it's important that you have a good relationship with an employer network, and there's [employersnet.com](http://employersnet.com) you can go through, which is a national site, or just Googling. Local employer networks are also really nice partners to have.

So, co-enrollments. We talked a little bit about the importance of doing things right alongside each other. Right? It's important that we are laser-focused on the employment goal. But if housing is a barrier or mental health challenges, these are something that you need to address with that veteran... you can do all those things together, right? So, we talk about co-enrollments with your local American Job Center, your local AJC. So, I'm sure all of you know what your AJC is, but we'll just talk a little bit about how vital of a partner the AJC is for training opportunities. AJCs will list specific trainings that they have provided. In some cases, the AJC provides resources for those trainings to pay for various certifications and trainings. They also

maintain an eligible training provider list, or the ETPL, which is really helpful. That will show local training providers that they can refer to job seekers. AJC staff also, their whole job is just to be super smart at job development. So, the staff at the AJCs have insight into which providers offer trainings in these various areas that your veteran might have goals or interest in, and they also have their finger on the pulse when it comes to the labor market—the current labor market. And so, utilizing your AJC is super beneficial, and finding ways to create a good relationship can make a really positive impact on all of your veterans.

And so, we're going to go ahead and launch a poll, and the poll question is, “Do you have a strong partnership with your local AJC, your local American Job Center?” And if not, use the chat to let us know why. You know, what's holding you back? What do you think some of those challenges are? And if you have something really awesome to share about a positive relationship with an AJC, I'd love to hear about that, too.

- [Jenn]: Right now, the poll is 85% “yes.” Oh, it just changed! Sorry, 82% “yes” and 18% “no.” And we do have one comment in the chat. So, Mac said, “Yes, and thankfully we are in the same building.” So, they have a co-location.

- [Sarah]: Great example. Yes, co-locating with resources that are utilized by your veterans on a regular basis is so important. Great. Thank you so much for that example. What are some of the challenges? So that 18%, if you wouldn't mind, either raising your hand or putting in the chat, what do you think is holding you back from having a better, stronger relationship with your AJC? And you know this is really important for us so that we can share these challenges, these best practices, so that we can help potentially to bridge the gap for a lot of you all that might be having challenges, so is there anything you'd like to mention about what might some of those challenges with establishing a strong relationship with your AJC be?

- [Jenn]: So, there are a few comments in the chat. I'll go ahead and read, and then there is a hand raised as well. So first, we have Dennis, who says, “In my area, there has been, and continues to be, a personnel turnover. So I have a hard time knowing whom I can work with.” Next, we have Tanya, who says, “HVRP/AJC in Virginia Beach has a great working relationship. We are in constant contact.” William says, “I think the ability to have the resources in the area, especially for rural rural areas.” Then we have, “The staff working with the AJC isn't very friendly or helpful, and they do not refer the vets that come through.” Blake says, “They work hand in hand with all of the DevOps in North Dakota and other AJC personnel. I'm also co-located in the AJC.” So a couple of people are co-located. Then we also have Brandon. “They have resources for you but don't help you actually get a job.” And the last comment we have here is COVID did cause most locations to close down, or most people didn't have transportation or the knowledge to use Zoom or didn't know where to look for it.” And then we have one more comment. Sorry. “We have a DevOps that comes to our office weekly to help with co-enrolling clients.”

- [Sarah]: Oh, thank you all so much for mentioning that in the chat. Yes, you know, I've been working with other grantees as a TA provider, as I do here. I just want to validate that. I do hear that turnover can cause some challenges, as well as maybe some burnout from the AJC staff that

may not be coming across as helpful as I've heard them be with some other grantees. Rural areas, that was a great mention. There might not be as many resources, of course, for employment in rural areas as there are in urban areas—those sorts of things. Co-locating, also an amazing best practice, and that would be one of the challenges that I would try to toss over to the grantees on the line that may be having some difficulties with their AJC. Try to build rapport enough so that you can do some co-locating whether you've got somebody that comes to your site once a week, once a month even—or vice versa. You know, are you setting up shop over there? That seems to be one of the best practices that I've heard about creating that relationship, and it might be a little awkward at first, but the more that you're in front of that person or people, the easier it will get. Yes, okay, thank you all so much for that. And Jenn, did you say there was a hand raised?

- [Angela]: Okay, can you hear me? Can you hear me? Okay, so a lot of what has been said absolutely is a part of that complexity of our relationship. It isn't all bad. It's just the nature of what we're trying to do. We have two very separate programs serving veterans, but the programs don't always match up well. Also, there's an expectation by the IBES AJC staff that veterans come to them. And again, that's dependent upon which office we're working with. We cover a number of counties, five counties, including Cook County, which is where you find Chicago. So, the state of Chicago, of course, is very different from the rest of the state. So, what happens out in the suburbs is a little bit different as well. I think the biggest challenge is the fact that our programs are different, and we're serving different demographics of veterans. And the expectation that staff co-enroll with the veteran at the same time just doesn't always align.

- [Sarah]: Thank you so much, Angela, for sure... you're right. There's not a one size fits all approach to any of this. It is hard, especially when you know something's working well over in one area but maybe not as streamlined in the other area. So this is definitely a challenge that we, as NVTAC, are keeping our finger on just so that we can figure out ways to come up with innovative best practices. To maybe help bridge the gap for future periods of performance because this is a very important relationship. So, thank you so much for sharing that, Angela. Alright, great. Let's just keep on going.

Utilizing wrap-around supports. And so, we did talk about this a little bit earlier in the presentation, you know, leveraging resources through partnerships. It, of course, requires a lot of investment, a lot of time, you know, we had NVTAC have done quite a few peer-to-peers where we're talking to peers within the same reach. You know, talking about how you know investing that time looks so much different now with COVID than it did maybe you even five years ago. And so, we're really trying to, having to think outside of the box on how we're building that rapport with other partners.

I remember one of the best practices shared from a peer-to-peer that I worked with a few months ago was that, because there are not so many onsite locations as there were maybe five years ago, it's important that we kind of think outside of the box. And one of the best practices that were shared was with the limited hours bringing donuts by, or if donuts are kind of expensive in your area and you have a great partnership with your food pantry, you just bring pastries from the food pantry to a resource and sit down, share, build that rapport. You, as case managers or

employment specialists, are great at building rapport, right? You do it every single day with your veterans, and so that is needed when building rapport too with, of course, your AJCs or other wraparound supports that might really help that veteran. And so, not only are you building that rapport and leveraging partnerships with different supports, housing programs, they're also when we're talking laser focus in the employment area. You're building that rapport and partnerships with community colleges, industry associates, with vendors. These sorts of things, and the example that I gave before about having a co-location of a coordinated entry site at my drop-in center that I was working at, you know, we really did help share the cost in that area, right? Because it would have taken a lot the cost of more stuff, the cost of time, those sorts of things, to train a path at my nonprofit that I was working for, but instead, we just had somebody who was already trained up, who was already on their way, passed to do some other things. They just set up shop for 3 hours, and that really helped to get as many of those folks housed in that area.

Okay. So, this next one utilizing personal supports, you know, this is actually a gift in a lot of ways because you might be that first person in a really long time that that veteran sat down with an eye to eye and had a real honest conversation about what's going on, right? I remember it would break my heart when I would sit down with a youth client, and they would be like, "Wow, you're actually listening to me?" Like these sorts of very simple kindnesses go a really, really long way. And so, you know, when we are building that rapport with a veteran, and you're having the real talk conversations about their goals, but the goal setting is around personal options, you know. Maybe they mentioned their uncle, who has a mechanic shop, but they haven't spoken to their uncle in 10 years because there was a fallout due to this and that. Maybe you're building that rapport in such a wonderful way that it helps them to kind of pull out some of that information through motivational interviewing that maybe uncle would really like to see the veteran you're working with. Maybe uncle still has the mechanic shop open and would really like to give that veteran a chance. Or, you know, maybe so and so that you're working with has an auntie who has a flower shop or these sorts of things. It's important that you know they're utilizing their personal connections, and having a conversation with them can be kind of hard, right? We're not going to have a conversation about the IEP and connections day one. No, these sorts of deep conversations, this rapport building takes a lot of time, right? Just as us, we don't warm up to everyone day one. We're not best friends with everyone day one. Like you build these relationships through time. So, you're using that information about their personal connections in line with their IEP. Also, be mindful of the current markets. All of these things sort of floating around at one time, and so you know you as staff assist that veteran in identifying support systems within their community or within their family, within their chosen family, within their friends, you know, you're really sort of that brainstormer that helps them.

And so, if anybody has some examples of this "persons, places, things" idea. I would love for you to put it in the chat or unmute yourself. An example of how you have these kinds of conversations that might be more difficult, more deep, more personal conversations. If anybody's got best practices that they can share here, I would love to hear from two, please. Any examples of how you start the conversation around personal connections, especially working with those who have experienced homelessness? You know, talking about family sometimes can be hard,

talking about connections can be hard, because you know, especially in my case working with LGBTQ youth, a lot of them were abandoned and abused by their own families, and so kind of talking about those personal connections can be difficult. And how do you, as their case manager, as their employment specialist, how do you sort of bring this conversation up in a best practice way that helps them to think of everything? Not just the jobs that might be available on Indeed but jobs that might be available with personal connections. Any examples you can share here?

- [William]: Hi, no problem. So, when we're dealing with a lot of personal connections, and we're getting into the sense of materials and the touchy subjects to various things—whether it's abuse, neglect, or into any of the issues or problems in terms they have—I try to get them to feel warm and welcome, make it feel safe space-like. We don't have to have an instant rapport. But when I'm getting ready, I'm trying to figure out who this person is, what they are and what they stand for, what they're trying to do, what their goals are, and what their accomplishments are. If you can get them to talk about a couple of random things here and there, nine times out of ten, they just start to open up because they already feel that connection. So just making each conversation you have not an interview, or not like when you're sitting in a panel of like ten, where it makes them feel like they're being grilled for information and that they need to do these things and whatnot. You make them sit, and it's like you're having a cup of coffee with them, and you want them to feel warm, welcome, and invited. You want them to be able to express themselves in such a manner that they feel comfortable talking to you, and this helps you, and I know in most HVRP programs, you're having to write a success story at some point. So, when you're writing your success story, you can use these little hints and keys. These are the openings that you can step into. I had a client who didn't trust anybody between me and another program with their SSVF worker. We sat, and I made an informal introduction: “Hey, how are you? I'm going to be picking up your case file as an HVRP client. I look forward to working with you.” And then I let him do his thing, and then I had a meeting, and we sat down at the office, and he'd open up, and we started having conversations. We started talking about what his goals are in life, and these things, and that thing. And all of a sudden, he just started to open up, and you saw him become a different person, and he had a different personality. He became this very outspoken person who was willing to speak and say things instead of being so closed in and so closed off. It's just being personable with them and just having empathy as well as sympathy, but having an open ear, not just hearing them, but listening, because listening and hearing are two different things. You can hear what they're saying. But are you really listening? And these are the things that I found that have worked for numerous types of jobs. But with this one, in particular, hearing and listening, showing an empathetic ear, and just being open, and not making a disgruntled face or having an “oo” or an “ah” moment. Like, no, don't have those moments. Just sit and go. You know, “What? That is terrible!” and you just try to console them. You try to see what it is about them that makes them tick, and the more they become friendly and observant, and you sit, and you just listen, the more they're willing to open up, and then you can find where they might need something. Hey. Have you thought about having counseling for that? Or have you thought about going to this program? There's a fantastic program for you to go and check out. It's up to you. It's your choice type thing, and you find that they're more receptive to those kinds of things.

- [Sarah]: Absolutely. Thank you so much, William. You mentioned so many best practices. Really coming at this job, of course, with authenticity and warmness, right? Helping them to understand that you very much respect them and you value their time, right? They're instilling a lot of trust in us, you know, as case workers and employment specialists to talk about some of those really difficult things that maybe they just haven't really talked about since they were a kid or these sorts of things. And you're right, like, as cliched the term has become, the "safe space," right? But that is so true, creating that safe space for them and, like William said, that active listening. Are there some things that they're mentioning, just telling a story about their cat or just telling a story that they're LGBTQ or just telling a story about this or that? You know, your job really is to continue to help them feel safe. An example is maybe if they are talking about the fact that they're LGBTQ and maybe they don't see any flags. Something nice to do would be to wear a little flag pen or mention that you know you are an ally, or just that active listening really go a long way. Say they mention a love for their dog. And that's something that they're bringing up because they're not sure about getting a job if they can put their dog in a safe space. Those sorts of active listening techniques will really help to pull important things out, and then you can use that for their employment goals because that really is a motivating factor, right? And so, thank you so much, William. That was a great example. Do we have any other examples that you utilize around really having sort of these harder conversations so that you can get a better idea about their personal support systems? Anything that comes to mind?

- [Jenn]: Sarah, we do have a comment in the chat. Blake says, "My story does reflect most of the stories that my clients have, and that seems to get them motivated to share, which helps me guide them to the resources they need and suitable jobs that they can handle/want."

- [Sarah]: Great. Oh, that is a great example. Thank you. Yes. And is there anyone who has helped a veteran to utilize supports with family and friends? Has that ever come up where that has been a success? Where you, as the case worker, as the employment specialist, have built rapport to understand what types of family supports the veteran has, and that turned into a successful employment outcome? Are there any stories or examples that anyone can share on that? Or is anybody kind of almost there? Like you're just having that conversation. You're about to land that job at the flower shop with auntie, but you're not quite there. Anything? Any example to share here? And if not, that's okay! I think it's getting to be lunchtime for some. Okay, anything else in the chat or hands? No.

Okay. Well, this last portion of the VLC really is for you guys. Any questions that you have at all for me, for the NVTAC team, for each other? I'd really like for you to raise your hand or unmute yourself and utilize this time as a best practice share or just ask any questions that you've got on your mind. Even if they're specific client questions, any questions at all. Please unmute. Put in the chat or raise your hand. Well, I'll take that as a compliment if there are no questions. That means I hopefully answered everything. Any questions or comments? Any questions for other grantees on the line?

- [Jenn]: So, we do have one question. And then, before that, just so everyone knows, there was just a survey link dropped in the chat for you all. If you could take a couple of minutes just to



answer that survey about today's session, we would really appreciate it. Also, we have a question from Mac. "Can a resume take the place of an IEP?"

- [Sarah]: Well, that is a really good question. So, an IEP and a resume are going to be very different tools to help with the success of the veteran. The IEP really is a breakdown. It's a case management tool that helps that veteran let you know, let themselves know. Be very clear about what those goals are that they want to establish. And really, it's creating short-, medium-, and long-term goals, right? There are some great examples of an IEP on the NVTAC website. But really, some of the questions that you'll see on an IEP are, what areas need to be addressed? Is childcare a barrier? Are some education concerns a barrier? What is their financial literacy? These sorts of things. It's really to get a baseline of where your veteran is at that will help them with that career, get to that career goal. So, for example, let's say your veteran wants to be an IT supervisor. They'd like to work in IT, a technical job, right? And so maybe when they were in the army, they did some computer stuff, right? And so that's really motivating to them. So, the IEP will help with that career goal of being the supervisor of the IT career. And then what are some of those smaller steps that they need to take to get there? Because surely you know, in the real world with, let's say, a high school diploma, one can't necessarily just jump from a high school diploma or GED to a supervisor of IT, right? And so, what could some smaller next steps be? It could be to work at a call center. It could be to work at a help desk at your local geek squad, or these sorts of things, and so the IEP really is just the tool that helps that veteran to see what steps they need to take to get to that main goal with timelines. I'm going to apply to all the geek squads in my region by November 3rd. That includes five a day, and there are probably not even that many geek squads, but that just gives you an example. Whereas the resume really is sort of that one- or two-pager that shows the experience that the veteran has had in their career life. And so things that they've done in the army that should absolutely be on there. You know, I built computers in the army. I worked at a veterinary clinic as a tech. These sorts of things, so they do work hand in hand as the full... I think William mentioned before that having those two things, the IEP and the resume, as a package will really help that veteran to feel successful. And really, it's up to you as the case worker. You know your bandwidth. Do you have the bandwidth or the time to help them, you know, draft up that resume? Or is that a referral out to your, you know, your local career center at the Goodwill? Or is that you know those sorts of things? Did I help to answer that question okay for you?

- [Steve Dudasik]: Hi, Sarah! This is Steve. Yeah, Hi! Hi, Mac. This is Steve from our NVTAC team. I just like to add that Sarah is right on what you're saying, and regarding the resume and IEP, they are distinct, different, you know. One thing you have to remember for HVRP practice is that an IEP is required for all the folks you're working with. So just keep that in mind. Not to be directive, but it is an HVRP requirement that all your veterans have an IEP. And I think it's really important, as Sarah said, that the resume looks at past experience. The IEP could really supplement a new resume regarding where the person wants to go and maybe adapt the resume to maybe have a career summary on the top part of the resume that you know relates to skill sets that the veteran is bringing to the table but also states to how these skills match the career they're

going for. So, they're both flexible documents, but I've always found a good IEP really leads to an excellent in-the-now, I should say, in-the-moment resume as well.

- [Sarah]: Hi Steve. Thank you so much, Steve. I appreciate that addition absolutely. Did that help to answer your question there in the chat? I hope so, Mac. Any other questions or hands raised for me, for the NVTAC team, or.... Thank you, Mac. I see here. Yes, it did. Or each other? Any questions that you have at all, or comments even? Feel free to raise your hand or add it in the chat. Okay. Okay, thank you so much.

Well, Great. Thank you. Thank you all so much for your time today. I really hope that it was informational, and I hope it gave some insights. I hope it was enjoyable. I hope I wasn't too much of a snooze fest for you. We just want to thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, the NVTAC team, for joining today. Just a quick reminder, we are here to support you throughout your whole period of performance, and so if you have any challenges, if anything's just kind of annoying you a little bit, or if you really wish that you could kind of figure out a process or find success through a challenge that you're going through, please, email us at [contact@nvtac.org](mailto:contact@nvtac.org). There are loads and loads of resources on the [nvtac.org](http://nvtac.org) website. Go ahead and check that out, from pre-recorded trainings to IEPs, those sorts of things. But if there are things that you'd like that are more one-on-one, where you'd like to meet with Steve, Jenn, or me to discuss with your team, whether you're onboarding new staff or what have you, please, reach out to us. Even if it's just a random question about something, please feel free to reach out to us. Our primary job is to help you.