

**National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)  
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Community of Practice (CoP)  
Job Development and Placement for People Living with Mental Health and/or Physical  
Health Challenges  
Thursday, May 25, 2023, 3 – 4 p.m. ET**

## **NVTAC Staff**

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## **Key Points**

- **Introduction**
  - This session provided an overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and HVRP strategies for veterans living with mental health and/or physical health challenges.
  - NVTAC reminded attendees HVRP best practices would be shared during this session. NVTAC encouraged all grantees to utilize best practices that may improve their service delivery. Before implementing a practice discussed during this session, grantees must review their award statement of work and contact their Grant Officer's Technical Representative (GOTR) to determine if it is an allowable cost or activity, or if it requires an amendment to their approved plan.
- **Working with Veterans with Physical and/or Mental Health Challenges**
  - It is crucial for partnerships to be created with organizations that provide employment-focused support, such as supportive employment, vocational rehabilitation, and job accommodations. These partnerships provide wrap-around support for veterans throughout the case management and job development process.
  - HVRP staff should fully understand how work affects U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) to best serve veterans who receive these benefits.
  - HVRP staff and partners must understand that job development can take place concurrently with additional services a veteran with physical and/or mental health challenges may be receiving. Referring veterans to programs that provide services outside of what HVRP can offer (e.g., housing, mental health) enables the veteran to work on various challenges simultaneously.
- **The ADA**
  - The ADA is a civil rights law passed in 1990 that enables individuals living with disabilities to fully participate in all major life activities without discrimination. Major life activities include social, educational, and employment. Employers, state and local governments, public and private transportation, public-serving businesses, and telecommunication companies are required to make reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

- An individual must meet the following criteria to qualify for workplace accommodations under the ADA:
  - Have a physical or mental health challenge that substantially limits their opportunity to work, be promoted, etc.;
  - Have a history of living with a disability, even if it is currently in remission;
  - Be seen by others as living with a disability (mental health or physical health); and
  - Self-disclose the need for accommodation at any time pre- or post-hire.
- It is a common misconception that individuals must disclose their disability at the time of hire, which is not the case. Individuals with disabilities are protected under the ADA and may self-disclose their disability at any point during or after the hiring process. If a new disability is developed or diagnosed while the individual is already working, they also have the right to request reasonable accommodations.
- Employers with more than fifteen employees are required to make reasonable accommodations, which includes any change made to the job role or work environment that ensures that people living with a disability can perform all essential job functions. The employer can request medical documentation from the employee if the disability is “hidden” to determine if accommodations are required. The reasonable accommodations must not create undue hardship for the employer, which is determined by the employer themselves.
- **Discussion Question:** How are you ensuring you and your team are well-informed about the ADA?
  - **Response:** Connect with partners and online services who provide ADA training for staff.
  - **Response:** Reinforce with staff that knowing what the ADA means and fully understanding the rights of the veterans they are serving is a very crucial piece of HVRP work.
- **Discussion Question:** How have you followed the ADA as part of your job development and placement process?
  - **Response:** Begin to build trust with the veteran from the start of the HVRP process so they feel comfortable discussing their challenges and accommodation needs.
  - **Response:** Tour the facilities of employers in advance to understand what potential triggers may occur on the job for veterans with mental and/or physical health challenges. By doing so, you can have an informed discussion with veterans prior to accepting or beginning a job with that employer.
- **Job Development Strategies**
  - Inform and educate veterans, partners, and employers about ADA rights throughout the job development process.

- Through conversations with the veteran, determine if their physical and/or mental health challenge would potentially impact their success in a job, and discuss what accommodations in the workplace may be needed.
- Prepare and empower veterans to ask for the reasonable accommodations they are entitled to under the ADA.
- **Discussion Question:** How do you empower veterans to self-disclose or ask for accommodations?
  - **Response:** The conversation around challenges begins at intake but is embedded throughout the entire Individualized Employment Plan (IEP), job development, and job placement process. Empowerment for self-disclosure can be built throughout the discussions.
  - **Response:** Ensure veterans understand the law protects them from needing to disclose their disability at the point of hire if they are more comfortable self-disclosing and requesting accommodations at a later point.
- Some job development strategies include cold-calling employers, leveraging existing partnerships to connect with new employers, visiting and taking tours of employers, inquiring about current and future available jobs, and providing a description of HVRP and the support provided. When describing HVRP, highlight that partnering would provide them with a no-cost service with a continuous labor pool of potential employees.
- Through discussion with the employers, inquire about how they provide reasonable accommodations.
- **Discussion Question:** What are some challenges you have experienced developing jobs for people with physical and/or mental health challenges?
  - **Response:** Getting in contact with potential employers to develop a partnership has been difficult. In the past few years, it has become more difficult to initiate a partnership by going to the employer's location and sharing information in person. Sometimes when emails are sent instead, a response is not always received. Calling the employer via phone has been most successful to overcome this challenge.
- **Resources**
  - [How Work Affects Social Security Benefits](#)
  - [Veteran Readiness and Employment](#)
  - [The ADA](#)
  - [ADA Guide for Veterans](#)
  - [Reasonable Accommodations for Disabilities](#)
  - [Veterans and the ADA: A Guide for Employers](#)
  - [Work Opportunity Tax Credit \(WOTC\)](#)
  - [Job Accommodation Network](#)

## **Conclusion**

It is crucial for HVRP staff to understand the ADA to inform veterans with mental health and/or physical health challenges of their rights. HVRP plays a role in providing veterans with the proper knowledge of the ADA, empowering veterans to self-disclose, and equipping veterans with necessary information to ask for reasonable accommodations in the workplace. NVTAC plans to discuss mental health and/or physical health challenges further through technical assistance activities and events.

*You can review the presentation slides through the following link: [NVTAC May 2023 CoP](#)*