

**National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Virtual Learning Courses (VLC)
Session 4 of 4: Serving Women and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in the
HVRP
Thursday, May 11, 2023, 2 p.m. ET**

NVTAC Staff

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Key Points

- **Introduction**
 - **Liberated Spaces Agreement:** NVTAC explained that the liberated space agreement comes from [ThirdSpace Action Lab](#) out of Cleveland, Ohio. NVTAC encouraged everyone on the call and throughout the discussions and session to assume positive, unconditional intent among fellow attendees. Guidelines were established so everyone could be on the same page because these conversations can be difficult.
 - **Step up/step back:** For those of us that tend to share more or talk a lot, it is important that we allow others to speak.
 - **Be attentive with words and tone:** To help everyone feel more comfortable to be present and share. Even when our intentions are good, the impact of our words may have the opposite effect.
 - **Sitting in our discomfort:** Because the topic shared today can be challenging for some, we must challenge ourselves to sit in our discomfort and try to identify why we feel a certain way about some of the words and topics we are discussing.
 - NVTAC reminded the attendees that HVRP best practices will be shared during the session. NVTAC encourages all grantees to utilize best practices that may improve their service delivery. However, before implementing a practice discussed during this session, grantees must review their award statement of work and contact their Grants Officer Technical Representative (GOTR) to discuss whether it is an allowable cost or activity or requires an amendment to their approved plan.
 - **NVTAC Overview:** NVTAC provides individualized technical assistance (TA), training, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and additional support to HVRP grantees. To contact NVTAC or request TA, reach out to contact@nvtac.org.
- **Women**
 - Women veterans experience homelessness disproportionately and are twice as likely as non-veterans to experience homelessness. Any additional intersections

can add compounding challenges for women, such as having a mental health challenge or a physical disability.

- **Case Management Strategies**
 - Trauma Informed Care (TIC) training for all HVRP staff is an important and impactful approach to meet the veteran where they are at.
 - Assisting the veteran with skills and tools to advocate for themselves during the job search and hiring process.
 - Case managers should refer out for supportive services that HVRP cannot provide.
 - Engaging in work talk regardless of the veteran's barriers or challenges and centering conversations with employment as a viable outcome.
 - Helping the veteran identify and highlight transferable skills they gained in the military that they can use in the civilian workforce.
- **Job Development Techniques**
 - Identifying barriers that specifically affect women more often, such as challenges with finding consistent childcare and identifying employment opportunities that meet women's unique needs and offer flexibility and work-life balance.
 - Helping women veterans understand that even though they may have gaps in their work history, they are still very employable.
 - Using motivational interviewing to address leadership skills gained from the military and highlight those in their resume and at interviews.
 - Emphasizing that you have multiple veterans who may be a good fit for the positions available when trying to partner with employers.
 - Setting veterans up for success, especially if they have a gap in employment, using interviewing skills so they are more prepared and confident during the interview process.
- **Resources**
 - [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\) Research Reveals Circumstances That Can Lead to Homelessness Among Women Veterans](#)
 - [VA Employment - Center for Women Veterans](#)
 - [Women Veteran Alliance - Career Center](#)
- **Discussion Question:** What challenges are you experiencing reaching and serving women?
 - **Grantee response:** Finding childcare for women veterans is a challenge. Reliable and trustworthy childcare is essential to get back into the workforce. We have found a specific childcare agency that is willing to work with HVRP.
 - **Grantee response:** It is challenging for some female veterans to trust a male employment specialist.
 - **NVTAC response:** Especially for women who have experienced different forms of trauma from a male, they may be reluctant to work with a male in

HVRP. When possible, accommodate a veteran who feels more comfortable working with a female employment specialist; that is a client-centered approach. Looking at wrap-around services that may help a trauma survivor alongside her employment journey can be a helpful approach.

- **Grantee response:** Many women do not identify as veterans and are, therefore, hard to find for HVRP.
- **Grantee response:** Grouping women veterans with peer supports can be a solution for women who need extra assistance while working through employment goals.
- **NVTAC response:** It can be very beneficial for veterans to connect with other veterans who are going through the employment process for validation and to support one another.
- **Grantee response:** A challenge is when women try to enter a male-dominated field.
- **Discussion Question:** What are some best practices or innovative solutions you have utilized when working with women?
 - **Grantee response:** Finding peer support groups specifically for women has been a great solution. This partnership has also helped obtain referrals.
 - **NVTAC response:** Partnering with local agencies targeted specifically for women, such as women's and domestic violence shelters, is a great place to start.

- **BIPOC**

- 43.2 percent of veterans experiencing homelessness are BIPOC, although they only make up 18.4 percent of the general population. There is a huge racial disparity in the homelessness system nationwide.
- **Engagement and Outreach Strategies**
 - When outreaching to the BIPOC population, it is helpful to have HVRP staff that is representative of the veterans you serve, with lived experience in homelessness and being a veteran, as well as, various ethnicities represented.
 - Creating strong partnerships with local agencies that serve BIPOC can help the veterans you want to serve to feel more represented and comfortable. This strategy can also help bring in more referrals.
 - Ensuring HVRP staff are trained in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) and TIC.
- **Case Management Strategies**
 - Having all HVRP staff attend culturally informed trainings to ensure they are serving veterans with a culturally informed lens and having open discussions with HVRP staff about how racism impacts the veterans we serve.

- Educating staff on institutional racism and the impact of laws and policies within systems and institutions that promote racism (e.g., redlining in communities). Structural racism is a system of practices, laws, and cultural norms within a society that are inherently racist toward BIPOC. Looking at all the systems your veteran is experiencing that come into play and helping to empower them to advocate for themselves if they encounter discrimination.
 - Understanding the local community and what is available to BIPOC can help empower the veteran to obtain employment successfully.
- **Job Development Techniques**
 - Outreach to employers that uphold anti-racist values and align with your mission.
 - Take the opportunity to visit places of employment to observe the workplace culture and see how diverse they are.
 - Find appropriate wrap-around services to veterans and have a consistent approach to referring out for services that HVRP cannot provide.
 - Listening to the veteran’s employment goals and skill sets and finding training and hiring opportunities that align can help bolster their resume.
 - Mentoring and leadership opportunities can be very impactful for the veteran as they move on with their career and employment experience.
- **Resources**
 - [VA - Racial and Ethnic Minority Veterans](#)
 - [People of Color Make Up a Disproportionate Share of the Homeless Veteran Population](#)
 - [Father Joe’s Village - Demographics and Statistics of the Homelessness Crisis in America](#)
- **Discussion Question:** What challenges are you experiencing reaching and serving BIPOC?
 - **Attendee response:** It’s difficult to find employers who want to work with veterans who may have some challenges at work. To help with this, HVRP staff went to job fairs to talk with employers, explain HVRP and some of the possible challenges veterans may have, and gauge if the employers will still work with them.
- **Discussion Question:** What are some best practices or innovative solutions you have utilized when working with BIPOC?
 - **Attendee response:** The elephant in the room is that veterans who experience homelessness are stigmatized, and employers often assume that veterans may have mental health and substance use challenges. This is why building relationships with employers beforehand is so important. If not, you will often see veterans who are paid lower wages or given entry-level positions, even if they are highly qualified or have a degree.

- **NVTAC response:** Sometimes, people experience stigma as an isolated situation, but it is important to understand that veterans can also experience stigma from different directions. They may face stigma in regard to being BIPOC, or if they are connected to a program, or assumptions about people experiencing homelessness. You are not working towards dismantling complex stigma in one area, but all areas. It starts with you, how you are communicating about the program, and how you talk to employers and carefully foster relationships that address the stigma. When having conversations with employers, we must advocate for quality work and a livable wage.
- **Attendee response:** We put veterans on our HVRP team and ensure that many ethnicities are represented on staff that reflects the veterans we serve.

Conclusion

A disproportionate number of veterans who are women and BIPOC are experiencing homelessness in the nation. A lack of resources and societal stigma are common themes that can perpetuate homelessness and unemployment among women and BIPOC. Women and BIPOC require an individualized approach due to the compounding challenges and discrimination they may face.

This was the fourth and final VLC session within this series covering underserved populations. HVRP grantees can request individualized TA for their program at any time by emailing contact@nvtac.org.

For more information, please visit www.nvtac.org.

You can review the presentation through the following link: [NVTAC VLC May 2023: Serving Women, Indigenous, and People of Color in HVRP](#)