

**National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)  
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Virtual Learning Courses (VLC)  
Session 2 of 4: Serving Youth and Seniors in HVRP  
Thursday, May 4, 2023, 2 p.m. ET**

## **NVTAC Staff**

Jenn Steigerwald, NVTAC Coach

Steve Dudasik, NVTAC Coach

Sarah Chung, NVTAC Coach

## **Key Points**

- **Introduction**
  - 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](mailto:contact@nvtac.org).
- **Youth (Ages 18-24)**
  - Poll: Are you currently serving veterans under 25?
    - 54 percent of respondents said they are, 42 percent said they are not, and 4 percent were unsure.
  - Youth experience homelessness at a critically disproportionate rate. More than 3.5 million (1 in 10) youth are experiencing homelessness in the United States.
  - There is a significant undercount of youth homelessness as it is a hidden population since many are not in shelters and may couch surf, etc.
  - **Engagement and Outreach Strategies**
    - Since youth are a hidden population, it is important that you understand the youth population and where they frequent and look outside the box when conducting outreach. Contact and partner with youth-centric organizations because they will be more familiar with where youth hang out and how to reach them.
    - Creating feedback loops or a youth task force to get input on current processes can help make agencies more youth-centric.
    - Building partnerships with youth-centric employers and providing training that equips youth with leadership skills that are aligned with their Individual Employment Plan (IEP) goals.
  - **Case Management Strategies**

- Referring the veteran to other providers for services that HVRP does not offer and joining case conferencing meetings helps to get all the veteran support providers on the same page. Any referrals for wrap-around services are a continuum of care for that veteran.
- HVRP case managers become part of a larger network of supports for the veteran while always keeping their employment goal in mind.
- If it is safe to do so, encouraging family reconnection to help with workforce support.
- Asking about barriers the youth is experiencing such as technology or transportation and finding resources or referrals to assist.
- Identifying or establishing peer support groups for employed youth.
- **Job Development Techniques**
  - Veterans have a skill set and work ethic gained from the military that can be transferable to the civilian workforce.
  - Connecting youth to the resources and supports they need, such as interview attire or transportation, can help set them on the right foot for employment.
  - Conducting a warm handoff for employment services and training opportunities through the American Job Center (AJC).
  - Employment mentors can provide another level of employment support to youth veterans.
- **Resources**
  - [Voices of Youth Count: Chapin Hall](#)
  - [Youth Career Development and Exploration](#)
  - [Resources for Youth Homelessness: Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) Exchange](#)
  - [National Alliance to End Homelessness: Youth and Young Adults](#)
  - [National Network for Youth: Youth Homelessness](#)
  - [Covenant House: Youth Homelessness](#)
- **Discussion Question:** What challenges are you experiencing when reaching and serving youth?
  - **Grantee response:** Youth who are experiencing homelessness are often hard to find. They may be in emergency shelters and local colleges.
  - **Grantee response:** Youth often say they can work any job because they are unsure of their career goals. A case management strategy is to have the youth narrow down their goals to their top three job placement preferences.
  - **Grantee response:** Keeping youth engaged in case management is a challenge. They often do not maintain communication with HVRP to complete their goals due to competing priorities, such as finding housing.

- **NVTAC response:** Motivational Interviewing is a great technique to promote engagement with youth. Trust and relationship-building skills are very important when serving youth.
    - **NVTAC response:** Working with your housing partners is essential because employment can happen concurrently with finding housing.
  - **Discussion Question:** What are some best practices or innovative solutions you have utilized when working with youth?
    - **Grantee response:** Identifying certification or license programs that interest them with weekly check-in meetings to document progress.
    - **NVTAC response:** It does not have to be a new initiative or plan because small changes also add up and can make significant improvements for your program.
- **Seniors (Ages 55+)**
  - Poll: Are you currently serving veterans over 55?
    - Answers: One hundred percent of respondents said they are.
  - Seniors make up over 30 percent of the national homelessness population and experience mortality four times higher than the general population.
  - Homeless seniors age 10-20 years faster than their non-homeless counterparts due to the trauma of not being stably housed.
  - Seniors experiencing homelessness visit the emergency department (ED) at much higher rates than their non-homeless counterparts and make up 30 percent of the ED visits by adults experiencing homelessness.
  - **Engagement and Outreach Strategies**
    - Partnering with agencies that provide employment services for seniors, such as the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), can be a great strategy.
    - Seniors tend to be a hidden population, much like youth and may be challenging to locate.
    - Because homelessness for seniors can look so different for each community, it is helpful to do a local analysis to see where seniors are staying. A local analysis can be conducted by partnering with local shelters or street outreach workers to help identify seniors experiencing homelessness.
    - It can be daunting for seniors who have a period of unemployment to get back into the workplace. It is important to understand the specific needs of the senior you are serving and what additional supports they may need that HVRP cannot provide.
    - Partnering with senior-centric employers who will support and advocate for the needs of seniors so they feel both confident and prepared to re-enter the workforce.
    - Connecting with training services or community colleges to find training opportunities that meet the senior's employment goals.

- **Case Management Strategies**
  - If it is safe to do so, helping the senior possibly reconnect with family and relationship supports can help the veteran feel more supported when re-entering the workforce.
  - Age-related training and services that can fill in experience or knowledge gaps so the senior can be well-equipped when re-entering the workforce.
  - Connecting seniors with community partners for any barriers they may be experiencing, such as technology, mobility, or transportation. Referring the senior to other wrap-around services that HVRP cannot provide.
  - Peer groups for seniors may provide a validating place and support system for them to share challenges or successes with other employed seniors.
  - Going through all your policies and procedures to ensure they are assessable and appropriate for seniors.
- **Job Development Techniques**
  - Helping seniors identify transferable skills they developed while serving in the military as well as outside of the military to add to their resume in order to identify and apply those skills to the workforce.
  - Soft skills development training can better equip seniors with the skills needed to be competitive in the workforce.
  - Helping seniors navigate modern workplace culture may be needed to empower them to feel comfortable and confident re-entering the workforce again. Examples are identifying gaps and barriers in technology use, workforce dynamics, etc.
- **Resources**
  - [Aging on the Streets: America's Growing Older Homeless Population](#)
  - [Senior Navigator](#)
  - [How to Help Homeless Seniors](#)
  - [AARP Community Service Employment Program](#)
  - [U.S. Department of Labor \(DOL\): Senior Community Service Employment Program](#)
- **Discussion Question:** What challenges are you experiencing when reaching and serving seniors?
  - **Attendee response:** The veteran feels as though they are not wanted for work.
  - **NVTAC response:** Helping to build the confidence of the senior and empowering them to know that they will be extremely beneficial in the workforce and that their skills are needed can be an effective approach.
  - **Attendee response:** Seniors experience age discrimination at work. Subsidized housing is only up to two years, and not having a permanent address can pose some challenges.
  - **Attendee response:** Employment income affecting Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

- **Attendee response:** Locating jobs that do not require physical demands or computer skills are a challenge for serving seniors.
- **NVTAC response:** We want to make sure the jobs the veterans are seeking are not beyond what they can maintain.
- **Attendee response:** Outdated skill sets and having a history with the criminal justice system are challenging when trying to help seniors with employment.
- **NVTAC response:** Part of the initial work of HVRP is to identify what skills they have from prior experience and how they can be applied and updated to the current needs of the workforce.
- **Attendee response:** Some seniors are not willing to compromise on compensation because they may have a lot of experience and education in one area.
- **NVTAC response:** Helping the veteran identify what jobs they are looking for and what the average pay is will help the veteran have realistic expectations while re-entering the workforce.
- **Discussion Question:** What are some best practices or innovative solutions you have utilized when working with seniors?
  - **Attendee response:** Reassuring the seniors that employment is available helps build their confidence.
  - **Attendee response:** New potential HVRP participants look more relaxed when they see someone their age working in the office.
  - **NVTAC response:** Representation is very important when working with a veteran, and if they can identify with someone on your team, it may help them feel more comfortable, more seen, and more willing to trust the HVRP process.
  - **Attendee response:** Having the veteran do soft skills training before locating employment through an employment retention program such as Goodwill or Easter Seals.
  - **NVTAC response:** Connecting the veteran to training or support programs can help them build their confidence before entering the workforce.

## Conclusion

A disproportionate number of youth and seniors are experiencing homelessness in the nation. Youth and seniors may be difficult to locate due to the hidden nature of both populations. A lack of resources as well as societal stigma are common themes that can perpetuate homelessness and unemployment among youth and seniors. Youth and seniors require an individualized approach due to the compounding challenges they may face.

This was the second of four VLC sessions within this series covering underserved populations. HVRP grantees can request individualized TA for their program at any time by emailing [contact@nvtac.org](mailto:contact@nvtac.org).

For more information, please visit [www.nvtac.org](http://www.nvtac.org).

*You can review the presentation through the following link:* [NVTAC Virtual Learning Course May 2023 Serving Youth and Seniors in HVRP](#)