

**National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Virtual Learning Courses (VLC)
Session 2 of 4: Motivation Interviewing (MI) for HVRP
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Key Points

- **Introduction**
 - NVTAC reminded attendees that 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 Technical Representative (GOTR) to discuss if it is an allowable cost or activity or if it 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.
- **MI: The Stages of Change**
 - What is MI?
 - MI is a collaborative conversation that focuses on increasing the participant's motivation to change. Case managers use active listening and other techniques to guide the conversation, but the client drives the process. MI also helps identify which of the five stages of change the participant is in (pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance).
 - MI recognizes that change is hard, and the process is fluid. The goal is to encourage participants to move from a state of stasis to action and obtain employment.
 - MI can be applied to HVRP practice and almost all aspects of an individual's life, but it is not a therapy model.
 - Pre-Contemplation
 - Participants in this stage are not considering change or seeing it as an option – they are not interested in seeking employment.
 - Example of responses in the pre-contemplation stage:
 - “I cannot work.”
 - “I cannot find a job.”
 - Example behaviors of the pre-contemplation stage:
 - Individual was engaged with HVRP but is no longer engaged.

- Others want them to work, but they do not.
 - Another veteran-oriented organization referred them to HVRP as a requirement for their case management. “I was sent here by...”
 - Encouraging and Building Trust
 - Build a working alliance – have scheduled weekly contact and follow up if they do not initially respond.
 - Connect with the referral source.
 - Have open-ended conversations and use work talk.
 - Eliminate close-ended questions, such as, “Are you looking for work?” Discuss work and military history and establish a dialogue that centers on vocational topics.
 - Let the individual tell their life story; listen for details about their interests, skills, talents, and work history – take them out in their community for coffee.
 - Getting out of the office and into the individual’s community can relax the participant, building trust and respecting them as a human being.
 - Provide information and raise awareness about HVRP services.
 - Contemplation
 - Participants in the contemplation stage are thinking about making a change but are unsure about following through with it. They see employment as a possible goal.
 - Example responses:
 - “I might.”
 - “Sounds interesting.”
 - “I think this might be something I want to do.”
 - Example behaviors:
 - Wanted to be referred to HVRP
 - Asks the HVRP case manager about what the program can offer.
 - Active Listening:
 - Help the individual discuss ambivalence about work. Developing the mindset where the individual may start to move away from resistance and move toward thinking about working.
 - Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of working and how it will affect their general benefits and life. Speak with their supports (if applicable – friends, family, significant others, social support workers). Use a wraparound approach to guide the individual toward employment.
 - Make other successful individuals’ stories available to potential job seekers (testimonials). Peer-to-peer groups are important and effective tools at this stage of change to help motivate individuals to seek employment.

- Preparation
 - Participants in the preparation stage have a defined intention to change and plan to do so. They are closer to seeking and obtaining employment than those in the contemplation stage. They want to become employed and have established goals with a defined plan.
 - Example responses:
 - “I will.”
 - “I want.”
 - “This is great. I can see you respect me and my desires.”
 - Example behaviors:
 - Develops an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) with the HVRP case manager.
 - Case manager should use their best judgment to determine when it is appropriate to begin discussing an IEP and pushing the participant to set goals. Being too aggressive can lose the person.
 - Attends all HVRP appointments.
 - Guide and Move to Action
 - Help problem-solve perceived barriers (e.g., referring to a benefits specialist for benefits analysis) and engage wraparound services as they relate to helping the individual gain employment.
 - Reinforce the individual’s ability to work by giving them hope and developing strategies for placement success.
 - “You can do this.”
 - “You have the skills and abilities.”
 - “HVRP has the tools to help you.”
- Action
 - Participants in this stage commit to making change. They are ready and excited to take the steps towards gaining employment. They also follow their IEP to achieve work-related goals.
 - Example responses:
 - “I am excited to.”
 - “I cannot wait to get started.”
 - “I can.”
 - Example behaviors:
 - Initiates active job search that can lead to placement.
 - Has informational visits with employers.
 - Can be set up by HVRP staff.
 - Can be set up by the participant.
- Inform, Clarify, Educate
 - HVRP case managers can help the individual prepare resumes and prepare for interviews by doing role plays and mock interviews with real

employers. These mock interviews are tailored to the individual's goals, rather than broad topic or field interviews. HVRP can also help the individual follow up after submitting applications and after interviews. That's part of the HVRP case management approach.

- Help the individual begin the job by using follow-along supports checklists, talking about transportation, childcare, or anything else that involves what will happen once that veteran starts working. Engage in ongoing assessment and problem-solving and update vocational profile as necessary.
- HVRP should try to meet at least weekly with the individual, more often at the start of a new job, to establish what follow-up supports will look like. At the end of this stage, the participant should be placed, and you work to identify what follow-up supports involve post-placement.
- Maintenance
 - Participants in the maintenance stage are successfully employed.
 - Example responses:
 - "I have a job, and I am really loving it."
 - "I now want to advance further," or "I now want to look at a better position at another employer."
 - Example behaviors:
 - Wants to explore promotion opportunities or develop professional skills. May want support to stay with the first position or develop skills for advancement.
 - May wish to transition to another workplace, and that is okay. Not every first placement is perfect, and HVRP can still help find the right fit.
 - Support and Encourage
 - With consent from the participant and as appropriate, meet the individual at the work site and go to performance reviews if possible. Meeting at a worksite can be an excellent way to show the participant that the HVRP staff is supportive and legitimately cares.
 - If consent is not given, meet at a location the individual chooses to discuss strategies to maintain their job or embark on a career path, such as after-hour coffee in the community.
 - Utilize resources to address job retention challenges, such as periodic work celebrations for HVRP celebrations, peer-to-peer groups for working veterans, or partner agencies and family supports.
 - Help the individual participant inquire about advancement opportunities. Does the individual have the right tools to continue the chosen career path or for advancement if opportunities arise?

- Assist the individual when advancements occur.
 - Develop natural supports by reviewing who can step in when HVRP is not there – who will help with reporting wages, etc.
- **Discussion Questions**
 - **Question:** I work with nearly 40 veterans, and meeting everyone weekly is nearly impossible. What can you suggest to follow the grant guidelines and still provide proper case management to my veterans?
 - **Response:** Having a lot of veterans can be challenging. You could meet with 8 to 10 people at a time based on their stage of change and spread it out so I can meet with everyone in a timely manner. Look at the length of those meetings. How long are they scheduled? Customize meetings based on the needs of everyone.
 - **Response:** Set up a schedule via a spreadsheet or another format that is easiest for you and set up calendar invites as appropriate.
 - **Question:** I get behind on case notes because I am on the road a lot trying to meet each veteran. What can you suggest?
 - **Response:** It's beneficial, even on the road, to jot down at least a few things right after that session. I did that when I was working on the road to document what happened in that session while it was fresh in my mind. For example, if you are scheduling time on a Friday to do six hours of case notes, you do not want to forget what happened on Monday with that individual.
- **MI Case Management Skills**
 - MI interventions use skills that apply to all case management HVRP interventions, universally in case management, and in most other aspects of life.
 - Unconditional Positive Regard
 - Case managers should not judge any HVRP participants; they need to set judgments aside and maintain unconditional positive regard. It is important to respect everyone as a human being and operate under the assumption that they are doing the best they can at that time in their lives.
 - Empathy
 - The ability to meet a person where they are and understand their experience and feelings is critical to case management. If someone is being released from incarceration, they may feel that they will have difficulty maintaining employability. The HVRP case manager needs to try to understand the participant's experience and feelings about what it is like to be in that situation. If the veteran did something negative in the past – what are they doing today to change that? Refocus on today and the future using empathy and unconditional positive regard.
 - Proactive listening
 - Case managers can gain insight into what the veteran communicates through reflection and asking informed questions. Using MI, listen for key

phrases that can lend insight into that person’s stage of change. Then, use those statements to ask investigative questions to identify why they feel what they are communicating. Show the veteran that you are listening and build your relationship with them on a strong foundation of trust.

- Through proactive listening and asking informed questions, you can better understand what a person is really trying to communicate.
 - Is the person really “not ready to work?” – or
 - Is the person really unable to work because they do not have access to tools or transportation?
- Guide and Move to Action
 - Utilizing the skills of unconditional positive regard, empathy, and proactive listening to motivate veterans to achieve their employment goals wherever they are in their change process, we can guide that individual to progress to the point that employment is wanted and attainable.
- **Interactive Activity: Case Studies**
 - **Scenario:** Ruby is a 40-year-old army veteran who served in Afghanistan. She became homeless post-discharge. She is currently in a Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program and receives treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) through a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) outpatient clinic. She was referred to HVRP as she is thinking that she might want to work. This is her first meeting with an HVRP case manager. What stage of change is Ruby in?
 - **Answer:** Pre-contemplation
 - **Question:** What questions could you ask to learn more about Ruby and her desire to work?
 - **Response:** What are some of your skill sets and or job experiences related to this work?
 - **Scenario:** Steve is a 55-year-old veteran who uses a wheelchair and is a U.S. Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) client. He has been an active HVRP participant and wants to “work with computers.” What stage of change is Steve in?
 - **Answer:** Preparation
 - What questions could you ask to learn more about Steve and his desire to work with computers?
 - **Response:** What relevant qualifications and experience does the participant have, and what kinds of work would he like to do with computers? Client-facing, working back end, etc.?
 - **Response:** Is he interested in classes or certifications to enhance those skill sets?
 - **Response:** Why is he interested in this kind of work?
 - **Scenario:** Sarah is a 30-year-old, dually-diagnosed veteran who currently resides in a VA Grant per Diem (GPD) program. She was placed by her HVRP in a retail

store based on her interest to work in a sporting goods store and has been working successfully for 30 days. She is meeting with her HVRP case manager for follow-up support and stated that, while she loves her job and her colleagues, she is reluctant to ask her supervisor for help on new tasks she is learning. What stage of change is Sarah in?

- **Answer:** Maintenance
- How would you support Sarah to get help from her supervisor?
 - **Response:** Ask her what she is looking for and have her practice vocalizing that request.
 - **Response:** Find out why she is reluctant to ask her supervisor.
- **Discussion Questions**
 - **Question:** Beyond the case studies, what other MI techniques or responses have you used?
 - **Response:** Active listening, open-ended questions, reassuring participants, and advocacy.
 - **Response:** Showing that we care about their issues and future because we want them to succeed in everything they do.
 - **Response:** Develop trust with participants and make sure they understand we are not adversaries – we are their advocates.

Conclusion

HVRP grantees can learn and build upon MI skills such as understanding the five stages of change, applying MI stage-matched vocational interventions, and case management skills. When approaching case management through an MI lens, HVRP staff can better understand how to help individuals based on their current stages of change. Doing so may lead to increasing success rates for the individual participants as well as the HVRP program itself.

Throughout the remaining two VLC sessions, NVTAC will cover an overview of skills necessary to build and retain a successful HVRP team and develop ongoing partnerships, and the fourth and final session will cover an overview of requirements and skills for veteran training, job placements, and retention. 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 October 2023: MI for HVRP](#).