



National Veterans'
Technical Assistance Center

Justice-Involved Veterans

Community of Practice (CoP)

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National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC) Team



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Reminder

Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) best practices will be shared during this session. NVTAC encourages all grantees to utilize best practices that may improve their service delivery. Before implementing a practice discussed during this session, please review your award statement of work and contact your Grant Officer's Technical Representative (GOTR) to discuss if it is an allowable cost or activity or if it requires an amendment to your approved plan.

Poll: Does your organization currently engage with incarcerated veterans?

NVTAC Overview

NVTAC Role (1 of 2)

- Provide technical assistance designed to increase grantees' ability to establish and operate successful HVRP grants
- Support HVRP grantees throughout their period of performance to ensure that challenges are resolved quickly
- Provide effective training and peer-to-peer learning opportunities that result in increased knowledge and adoption of innovative practices among HVRP programs nationwide

NVTAC Role (2 of 2)

- Provide technical expertise to federal staff to assist in policy development in support of program oversight and strategic planning for the future of HVRP
- Quantify grantees' customer satisfaction and share promising practices and lessons learned

Agenda (1 of 3)

- In this training, you will learn about:
 - Definition of justice-involved veterans
 - HVRP eligibility definition
 - Overall definition
 - Statistics on recidivism and employment
 - Needs and challenges of justice-involved veterans
 - Unique needs and challenges
 - Barriers and possible solutions based on the nature of individual situations

Agenda (2 of 3)

- You will also learn about:
 - Strategies for case managers
 - Trauma-informed care
 - Types of appropriate supportive services
 - Reentry and legal services
 - Reentry Employment Opportunities Demonstration Program (REO)
 - Coordination with Veterans Treatment Courts (VTC)

Agenda (3 of 3)

- You will also learn about:
 - Outreach and in-reach strategies
 - Partnerships with state and federal Departments of Correction (DOC)
 - How to have impactful conversations regarding justice-involvement with veterans
 - Knowing their rights
 - Why is it important
 - How we can locate and engage with justice-involved veterans
 - What we can do to help

Definition and Statistics

Participant Eligibility Definitions (1 of 2)

- Veterans Transitioning from Incarceration
 - A veteran who is a resident of a penal institution, or an institution that provides long-term care for mental illness; and
 - Is at risk of homelessness absent referral and counseling services provided under the program.

(Source: [Veterans' Program Letter \(VPL\) 02-23 HVRP Participant Eligibility](#), Attachment [1](#) and [38 U.S.C. 2023 - Referral and counseling services: veterans at risk of homelessness who are transitioning from certain institutions](#))

Participant Eligibility Definitions

(2 of 2)

- Veterans recently released from incarceration who are at risk of homelessness
 - For purposes of determining a veteran's eligibility for the HVRP programs, the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) considers "recently released from incarceration" to mean a veteran released from incarceration in the last 12 months who is at risk of homelessness.

(Source: Annual Appropriations, [VPL 02-23 HVRP Participant Eligibility](#), attachment [1](#))

Definitions

- The term justice-involved Veterans is used to describe former service members who have been detained by or are under the supervision of the criminal justice system. Their involvement can range from arrest, to court involvement, to incarceration in jail or prison.

(Source: [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\) \(Veterans and the Criminal Justice System\)](#))

Statistics (1 of 3)

- According to 2021 census data, veterans make up about 6.5 percent of the U.S. population, yet 31 percent of veterans have been arrested at some point in their lives compared with 18 percent of non-veterans.

(Source: [U.S. Census Bureau](#))

- Veterans account for nearly eight percent of individuals incarcerated in state prisons and more than five percent of those in federal prisons.

(Source: [U.S. Department of Justice \[DOJ\] - Veterans in Prison](#))

Statistics (2 of 3)

- Recidivism
 - In a study from 2011–2012, the U.S. National Inmate Survey shows that 62 percent of veterans in jails report 4 or more prior arrests, and 68 percent of veterans in prison report at least one prior episode of incarceration (Bronson et al. 2015).

(Source: [DOJ: Veterans in Prison and Jail, 2011–12](#))

Statistics (3 of 3)

- Unemployment
 - Unemployed former prisoners were three times more likely to return to prison one year after release than individuals who were employed making more than \$10 an hour. (Visher, et al., 2011)

(Source: [Justice-Involved Veterans and Employment](#))

Needs, Challenges, and Solutions

Needs and Challenges (1 of 2)

- Needs and challenges
 - Securing meaningful employment
 - Connecting to needed resources and services
 - Identifying benefits for veterans with the VA and beyond
 - Housing stability
 - Addressing possible physical or mental health challenges
 - Having a healthy support system in order to adjust to civilian life
 - Finding advocates or peer support in the community for different needs

Needs and Challenges (2 of 2)

- Needs and challenges
 - Connecting to needed resources and services
 - Identifying benefits for veterans with the VA and beyond
 - There are more than 18 million veterans, per the 2017 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau. About half of those veterans are enrolled in the VA health care program

(Source: [National Academy of Sciences - Veterans Challenges](#))

Barriers and Solutions (1 of 4)

- Access to Personal Identifiable Information (PII)
 - Work with local social service agencies who can get free IDs and birth certificates, etc.
- Access to resources and critical need items
 - Leverage resources with partner agencies on items the veterans need that HVRP does not provide
 - Finding access to transportation

Barriers and Solutions (2 of 4)

- Housing
 - Work with local housing resources (Supportive Services for Veterans Families [SSVF], Grand and Per Diem [GPD], U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing [HUD-VASH], non-veteran housing options)
 - Set up case conferencing to get all agencies on the same page

Barriers and Solutions (3 of 4)

- Having a lapse in employment
 - Coach the veteran on how to explain the lapse in employment during an interview
 - Encourage the veteran to take a class or get a certification
 - Encourage the veteran to volunteer for a cause they are passionate about
 - This can also boost self-confidence and help them get involved in the community

Barriers and Solutions (4 of 4)

- Having justice involvement
 - Example: If the veteran has a cyber felony, they may not get an information technology [IT] job
 - Identify other skills or apprentice programs the veteran is interested in
 - Inform the veterans of their rights
 - Inform the employer of the tax benefits of hiring veterans (i.e. [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#))
 - Coach the veteran on how to talk to employers and others about their justice involvement without saying too much.

Federal Bonding Program

- The DOL [Federal Bonding Program](#) provides Fidelity bonds to both “at risk” and hard-to-place individuals seeking employment
 - The Fidelity bonds cover the first six months of employment at no cost to the job applicant or the employer
- The Federal Bonding Program targets individuals whose backgrounds can pose significant barriers to securing or retaining employment, which includes:
 - Justice-involved citizens
 - Individuals in recovery from substance use disorders
 - Welfare recipients
 - Individuals with poor credit records
 - Economically disadvantaged youth and adults who lack work histories
 - Individuals dishonorably discharged from the military

Strategies for Case Managers

Definition and Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

- Trauma-informed care involves understanding and addressing the impact of trauma on individuals
- Key Principles
 - Safety
 - Trustworthiness
 - Choice
 - Collaboration
 - Empowering environment

Understanding Trauma in Justice-Involved Veterans

- Trauma can profoundly influence behavior, coping mechanisms, and ability to reintegrate into civilian life
- Common Traumas
 - Combat-related trauma
 - Physical trauma
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - (flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance behaviors)
 - Psychological trauma

Strategies for Trauma-Informed Care in Case Management

- Training and education
- Assessment
- Create safe environments
- Individualized care planning
- Collaborative partnerships

Supportive Service Options (1 of 2)

- Identifying Common Needs of Justice-Involved Veterans
 - Conducting needs assessments tailored to justice-involved veterans
 - Collaborating with justice system agencies (probation offices, courts, and correctional facilities)
 - Assigning dedicated case managers to justice-involved veterans
 - Providing cultural competency training
 - Assessing resources and identifying gaps
 - Establishing peer support groups

Supportive Service Options (2 of 2)



- Collaboration with Community Resources
 - Housing
 - Health care
 - Mental health
 - Well-being

Reentry and Legal Services

- Reentry and legal services for justice-involved veterans are crucial for successful reintegration into employment. By providing tailored legal assistance and support services, case managers can mitigate barriers and facilitate the transition of justice-involved veterans into stable meaningful employment
 - Access to legal resources
 - Coordination with legal service providers (referral network, on-site legal clinics, etc.)
 - Comprehensive reentry support

Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO)

- REO provides funding for justice-involved youth, young adults, and adults who were formerly incarcerated
 - [REO Fact Sheet](#)
 - For REO resources and newsletter, visit the REO community on [WorkforceGPS](#)
- Some of the core services offered to participants include:
 - Apprenticeships
 - Case management
 - Career exploration through work experience and internship
 - Employer connections
 - High school diploma equivalency preparation
 - Job placement
 - Legal assistance
 - Mentoring
 - Needs assessments
 - Occupational training in in-demand industries
 - Pre-employment skill-building services

Employment and Recidivism (1 of 2)



- Impact of Employment Reducing Recidivism
 - Employment plays a pivotal role in reducing recidivism rates among justice-involved veterans. Studies consistently show that veterans who secure employment upon release from incarceration are less likely to re-offend. Stable employment provides financial stability, a sense of purpose, and social connections, all of which are crucial factors in successful reintegration into society

Employment and Recidivism (2 of 2)

- Strategies for Assisting Veterans in Obtaining/Maintaining Employment

Obtaining Employment	Maintaining Employment
Proactive Outreach and Engagement	Ongoing Support and Case Management
Vocational Training	Continuous Skill Development
Job Placement Assistance	Advocacy for Workplace accommodations
Mentorship and Peer Support	Active Employer Engagement

Importance of Vocational Training/Job Placement (1 of 2)

- **Skill Development:** Vocational training equips justice-involved veterans with practical skills and certifications relevant to current job market demands, enhancing their employability and job readiness (construction, plumbing, medical billing, culinary skills, office management, renewable energy jobs, data entry, soft skills - problem-solving)
- **Career Pathways:** Job placement programs connect veterans with employment opportunities aligned with their skills, interests, and goals, facilitating career advancement and long-term success

Importance of Vocational Training/Job Placement (2 of 2)

- **Stability and Self-Sufficiency:** By securing meaningful employment through vocational training and job placement, veterans gain financial stability and independence, reducing their reliance on government assistance and lowering the risk of recidivism
- **Community Integration:** Successful employment through vocational training and job placement promotes veterans' integration into the workforce and society, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose, which are essential factors in reducing recidivism

Outreach and In-Reach Strategies

Outreach and In-Reach Methods

- Direct Engagement
- Engagement with Secondary Providers
- Marketing/Public Awareness

Secondary Providers

- Jails
- Prisons
- Courts
- Correctional facilities
- Probation/parole offices
- Job training, vocational, and educational programs for incarcerated individuals
- Rehabilitation/treatment programs
- Legal aid clinics

Local Examples of Secondary Providers



- Maine: Kennebec County Sheriff's Office Incarcerated Veterans Initiative
 - Purpose: Assist veterans and their families in their transition from incarceration to the community
- Colorado: Adams State University Prison Education Program (PEP) for justice-involved veterans
 - Purpose: Provide educational opportunities to eligible incarcerated veterans
- Minnesota: Minnesota Assistance Council For Veterans (MACV) Justice-Involved Veterans team
 - Purpose: Provide case management, address barriers to housing, and refer to other community partners/supports
- Michigan: Michigan Incarcerated Veterans' In-Reach Program (MIVIP)
 - Purpose: Provide pre-release education, employment assistance, and career guidance to incarcerated veterans at seven correctional facilities in Michigan

VA Programs for Justice-Involved Veterans

- The Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) Homeless Programs Office offers support for justice-involved veterans
 - Veterans Justice Outreach Program (VJO)
 - Health Care for Reentry Veterans' Services and Resources (HCRV)
- VA regional offices have a homeless outreach coordinator who may assist justice-involved veterans in learning about benefit eligibility and applications and refer them to other organizations and resources tailored to their needs.
 - [Homeless Coordinators - VA Homeless Programs](#)

Veterans Justice Outreach

- **Mission:** Identify justice-involved veterans and contact them through outreach to facilitate access to VA services at the earliest possible point
- **Method:** Build and maintain partnerships between VA and key elements of the criminal justice system (courts, jails, prisons, etc.)
- **Contact:** Veteran Justice Outreach Specialists
 - Provide direct assistance to justice-involved veterans through connections to VA benefits and services and advocacy in criminal justice systems
 - VJO specialist contacts by state: [VJO - VA Homeless Programs](#)

Health Care for Re-entry Veterans' Services and Resources

- **Mission:** Promote success and prevent homelessness among veterans returning home after incarceration
- **Method:** Outreach and pre-release assessment services for veterans in prison, referrals and linkages to services (including employment services on release), and case management
- **Contact:** HCRV Specialist Contacts
 - [HCRV - VA Homeless Programs](#)

Veterans Treatment Courts

- **Mission:** Provide veterans with treatment for the unique clinical needs contributing to their justice involvement, such as substance abuse, mental health disorders, and trauma
- **Method:** Utilize evidence-based treatments, mandatory drug testing, incentives/sanctions, and recovery support services in judicially supervised court settings
- **Contact:** VTCs are administered by local courts and funded by local governments, making the processes, eligibility, and contacts vary by locality
 - Examples:
 - [North Dakota Court System - VTC \(ndcourts.gov\)](http://ndcourts.gov)
 - [VTCs Courts \(michigan.gov\)](http://michigan.gov)

Coordination Between Veterans Treatment Courts and HVRP

- Targeted Referrals: VTCs identify justice-involved veterans and refer them to HVRP for tailored support.
- Integrated Case Management: Establish management systems between VTC and HVRP staff.
- Comprehensive Services: Leverage resources to provide veterans access to a wide range of services.
- Peer Support: Utilize veteran mentors who have successfully navigated both systems to provide guidance.
- Evaluation: Assess the effectiveness of Joint intervention, successes, and opportunities for improvement.

Veterans Treatment Courts and Employment

A National Study of VTC Participants: *Who Benefits and Who Recidivates* (2018)

- **Purpose:** Gain information about VTC participant outcomes in functional domains
- **Results:**
 - At program entry, less than half of VTC participants had been employed in the last three years
 - Increase in housing and connection to VA benefits from program admission to exit
 - No change in employment from program admission to exit
- **Discussion:** Study findings highlight the importance of proper substance abuse treatment as well as employment services for VTC participants so that they can benefit from the diversion process

Source: Tsai J, Finlay A, Flatley B, KasproW WJ, Clark S. A National Study of Veterans Treatment Court Participants: Who Benefits and Who Recidivates. *Adm Policy Ment Health*. 2018 Mar;45(2):236-244. doi: 10.1007/s10488-017-0816-z. PMID: 28733771; PMCID: PMC5776060

National Resources for Justice-Involved Veterans (1 of 2)

National Institute of Corrections (NIC)

- Justice-Involved Veterans Network (JIVN) is a cross-divisional effort between NIC and the VA to identify gaps in services and improve outcomes for veterans in the justice system
- Assists with:
 - Reentry
 - Intercepting veterans in the justice system
 - Enhancing national VTCs
 - Offering best practices that result in positive outcomes for justice
- Maintains a map of prisons and jails with dorms for veterans
 - [Prisons and Jails with Dorms for Veterans | Justice-Involved Veterans \(nicic.gov\)](https://www.nicic.gov/justice-involved-veterans)

National Resources for Justice-Involved Veterans (2 of 2)

National Reentry Resource Center

- Nation's primary source of information and guidance in reentry
 - Assists with:
 - Facilitating information exchange (news, resources, funding opportunities)
 - Promoting best practices for reentry
 - Maintains a directory of all current Second Chance Act (SCA) grantees around the country and compiled a comprehensive reentry grant profile for each state:
 - [SCA Grantee Program Map | National Reentry Resource Center](#)
 - SCA grants support state and local agencies in reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for those leaving incarceration

Outreach Tips & Strategies

- Prepare all staff performing outreach with a consistent set of outreach materials.
- Approach with a clear ask.
- Understand the benefits of HVRP to justice-involved veterans and service providers within the justice system.
- Provide quality service and follow-up to maintain the connection.

Impactful Conversations with Justice-Involved Veterans

Impactful Conversations (1 of 2)

- Communicating with justice-involved veterans
 - Do not sugarcoat conversations
 - Unconditional positive regard
 - How to talk about criminal history or justice involvement and how NOT to talk about criminal history or justice involvement
 - Refocusing on what comes next instead of what happened in the past
 - Anger management skills for working through barriers with employers or other community supports

Impactful Conversations (2 of 2)

- Helping veterans understand their situation
 - Listen to their story
 - Barriers to employment in certain fields
 - Preparing them for a more difficult journey to employment
 - How to change the narrative from "ex-con" to "community member"
 - Expectations versus reality

Locating and Engaging

- How can we locate and engage with justice-involved veterans?
 - State DOJ
 - Non-profit agencies
 - VA VJO
 - Local law enforcement agencies
 - VTCs
 - In-reach to state and federal correctional facilities

Serving Justice-Involved Veterans

- Advocacy when talking to employers
- Seeking alternative opportunities aside from employment
 - Volunteer opportunities
- Building relationships with training providers
- "Regular" HVRP activities
- Peer support opportunities

Discussion Question: What has worked for your program when working with justice-involved veterans?

Discussion Question: What has NOT worked for you when working with justice-involved veterans?

Discussion Question: What advice or resources would you share with another grantee when working with justice-involved veterans?

Discussion Question: Have you seen a positive change in enrollments when using in-reach strategies to engage with incarcerated veterans?

Resources (1 of 2)

- [VPL 02-23 HVRP Participant Eligibility, Attachment 1](#)
- [VA \(Veterans and the Criminal Justice System\)](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau](#)
- [DOJ - Veterans in Prison](#)
- [DOJ: Veterans in Prison and Jail, 2011-12](#)
- [Justice-Involved Veterans and Employment](#)
- [National Academy of Sciences - Veterans Challenges](#)
- [NVTI 9610/JIVS: Career Coaching for Special Populations: Serving Justice-Involved Veterans \(JIVs\)](#)
- [NVTI Continuing Conversations: Serving Justice-Involved Veterans](#)

Resources (2 of 2)

- [National Reentry Resource Center](#)
- [Bureau of Prisons Employment Information Handbook](#)
- [Cleanslate Clearinghouse](#)
- [Find a Reentry Program near you](#)
- [Portal for Employers](#): Provides employers with a one-stop shop for information on the benefits of hiring persons with criminal records
- [Portal for Justice-Involved Individuals](#): Provides information, career guidance resources and tools to persons with criminal records

Thank you!

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