

**National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP): Understanding and Establishing
Relationships with Post-Secondary Institutions
Thursday, March 27, 2025, 3 p.m. – 4 p.m. ET**

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Key Points

- **Introduction**
 - NVTAC staff introduced the topic and purpose of today's COP: understanding and establishing relationships with post-secondary institutions. NVTAC reminded participants that any best practices shared during the training should be discussed with their Grant Officer's Technical Representative (GOTR) prior to implementation to ensure the activity is an allowable cost or whether it will require amendments to their grants.
- **What is a Post-Secondary Institution?**
 - A high-level explanation is that a post-secondary institution is an educational organization that provides learning opportunities beyond high school, offering a variety of academic, technical, and career-focused programs that lead to degrees, certifications, or other professional qualifications.
- **Examples of Post-Secondary Institutions**
 - Colleges and universities
 - Offer a broad range of academic and professional programs leading to degrees such as associates, bachelor's, master's, and doctorates, while also fostering critical thinking, research, and personal development.
 - **Community colleges**
 - Generally, a more affordable education through associates degrees, certificate programs, and transfer pathways to four-year universities, often serving the educational and workforce needs of the local community.
 - **Trade schools**
 - Specialized educational institutions that provide hands-on training and practical instruction in specific skill trades or technical fields, preparing students for direct entry into the workforce.
 - **Vocational programs**
 - Career-focused educational pathways that provide students with practical skills and training in specific trades or occupations, preparing them for immediate employment in specialized fields.

- **Why Post-Secondary Institutions?**

- When we are looking at why we want to engage with post-secondary institutions we want to engage with veterans no matter where they are going once they have separated from the military.
- As providers we want to reach veterans wherever they are going for services. For a lot of veterans, the first step post separation from the military is going back to school. There are a lot of options for people to return to civilian life and engage with some type of post-secondary program.
- Veterans receive education benefits through their military service such as from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), such as the Post 9/11 GI Bill or tuition assistance (either federal or state), or can receive funding for education through a vocational rehabilitation program through the VA called Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E). These benefits provide money for tuition, books, and most fees, as well as a monthly housing allowance (MHA).
- The GI Bill can also be used for registered apprentice and on-the-job training programs. The [GI Bill Comparison Tool](#) is a great resource for veterans to seek those programs in their areas to utilize their GI Bill.
- The MHA is sometimes not enough to cover the cost of everyday living expenses, resulting in financial hardship for some student veterans. There are expenses that veterans experience such as household expenses, rent, mortgage, utilities, car payment, car insurance; all of these expenses that compound and the MHA isn't always enough to offset the cost of losing those hours of work while veterans are returning to school.
- A lot of student veterans are taking advantage of post-secondary education post military; they have additional stress such as getting good grades and taking care of their families and all of their responsibilities. Veterans have a lot of stress on them after separation from the military.
- Veterans may seek connectivity on campus to engage with like-minded individuals with similar backgrounds, such as veteran resource centers, student organizations, or Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) units if available.
- Looking for programs on campus that help veterans stay connected such as the Student Veterans of American (SVA) chapter or a Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE) program, just to name a few.
- College campuses can feel very foreign to individuals who have served. Often, when veterans return to school, they feel isolated from other students due to lived experience, different world views, and motivation to attend college.
- Veterans may feel overwhelmed by the new environment and may feel isolated by other students who are fresh out of high school, particularly for those veterans who may have post-traumatic stress.
- Attending any kind of post-secondary institution as an adult learner can be stressful. Like other adults, veterans struggle with balancing home, grades, exams, study time, and, in a lot of cases, employment.

- There are a lot of students who struggle as adult learners, then to compound being a veteran and re-integrating into civilian life may be another level of added stress.
- To offset lost time on the job, veterans may utilize their federal financial aid (FA) for additional money, resulting in increased debt levels without necessarily meeting the financial needs of the household. Veterans may have to use those funds for day-to-day life and that can create an imbalance of debt.
- Sharing information with resources that directly engage with military-connected students can result in increased awareness of your services and can assist in reducing the stress these veterans and their families are facing.
- **Who to Engage With**
 - Who do we engage with on campuses so that veterans can get support while in school?
 - It's important to understand that before engaging with post-secondary institutions, privacy laws prevent sharing direct information to outside agencies, primarily to protect students at those institutions. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects educational information from unnecessary access.
 - Individual students may provide FERPA waivers to their schools for individuals or agencies to access their student information; however, in the case of HVRP, there is not a valid need for this level of access. Just keep in mind that some information is protected by law, so schools are not being "difficult" by denying information. The FERPA is used much like the release of information documents that we use for HVRP.
 - There are many post-secondary institutions that have several resources on campus that can be useful in assisting us in reaching military-connected students. Some examples of veteran specific programs in secondary institutions are student veterans' resource centers, student-led organizations and public engagement opportunities, school certifying official, registrar, bursar's office, ROTC unit leadership, office of student and campus life career services.
 - Student veterans' resource centers are central hubs for military-connected students and their families. Military-connected students may often seek assistance through their school's student veterans' service office. These can have a variety of names; however, it is usually easy to find out if a school has a military or veteran resource office or department with a simple search of the internet.
 - Services offered at veteran resource centers may include:
 - Tutoring, access to computer labs, veteran service officers (VSO), veteran benefit information presentations and more.
 - Social service agencies may also be invited into secondary institutions to provide office hours and talk to veterans about programs that are available to support them in the community.

- Student-led organizations and public engagement opportunities
 - Military-connected students may often seek connectivity through student organizations, and some schools may have veteran-specific student organizations. Reaching out to on-campus resources, such as Student Veterans of America (SVA) or the PAVE program can assist you in reaching those veterans who seek connection with other military veterans.
 - There are many ways that students seek out connectivity outside of veteran-specific programs. Reach out to other campus resources as appropriate. Not all student veterans will seek assistance or connectivity through their campus veterans' resource center, so seek engagement opportunities at main activity hubs, such as the Student Union, sporting events, and other campus activities.
 - Veterans may also reach out to non-veteran-specific resources on campus such as fraternities, theatre programs, musical programs, or intermural sports teams, etc. There is a wealth of ways that students find connectivity on campus.
- School Certifying Official (SCO)
 - Each post-secondary institution that accepts VA education benefits must have a SCO. The SCO is the person that verifies attendance for all military education benefit users, to include the Post 9/11 GI Bill, VR&E, Dependents Education Assistance (DEA), Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA), and state education benefits, and subsequently certifies that attendance and performance to the entity that pays for each benefit.
 - SCOs have records of everyone who uses military education benefits and could potentially assist in relaying information about your agency through targeted emails to those users. Smaller schools or trade schools tend to know all the veterans on a first name basis, which is a plus.
 - Benefit users could be veterans, spouses, current active-duty military service members, dependent children, and current national guard or reserve component members.
- Registrar's Office
 - The Registrar's office is responsible for maintaining academic records, registrations, course schedules and class lists, and other academic details. The registrar keeps track of who has those military codes on their transcripts, or in their students' files.
 - Some smaller institutions combine responsibilities of the Registrar and SCO. This is especially true in skilled trade programs, such as truck driving schools, niche skill programs, heavy equipment training programs, and so on that may only have a handful of military-connected students.
 - Registrars could potentially also provide direct emailing services to military-connected students at their institutions. They may also be able to help get the word out about HVRP to those veteran students as well.

- Bursar's Office
 - The Bursar's office should not be your first step when you are reaching out to a school about HVRP, but they are a good resource, nonetheless. The Bursar's office on a school campus manages the billing for student accounts. These responsibilities may also include management of student loans, grants, and scholarships.
 - The Bursar's office is also responsible for maintaining accurate financial records and preparing student account statements, often with records of which students have outstanding balances, possibly indicating financial stress. For example, if the Bursar's office sees those scholarships that are coming in from local military associations, they will keep track of that and who is paying the bills for these students.
 - Connecting with this office to share information about your program as a resource may result in that office sharing your information with military-connected students who are struggling with tuition payments.
- ROTC Unit Leadership
 - Not all student learners will know if their campus has a veteran service officer, or veteran specific programs, but generally they will gravitate to what is familiar. Most veterans will know about ROTC. Providing information to ROTC leadership, who are active-duty service members, can result in increased awareness of your program.
 - Educate ROTC leadership about your services and ask them to share details about what HVRP can provide to any military-connected students they encounter who may seek them out for assistance or connectivity.
- Office of Student/Campus Life
 - Not all veterans are going to seek connectivity through their on-campus veteran/military resources. Think of a person who served for three years in the active military, joined the work force, and has decided later in life to utilize their Post 9/11 GI Bill. You have a person who is older, who has a wealth of life experiences, and only three years of their life is taken up by military service. Ask yourself, where else may they seek connections for the other years of their lives that have nothing to do with the military?
 - Seek out the office of student and campus life at each school to find out how to engage with other student-led groups or affiliations that do not have any relationship with the military. You may find military-connected students that are not aware of the benefits for which they are eligible.
 - Connect with veterans wherever they are seeking any kind of sense of belonging on campus, even if it is not veteran specific.
- Career Services Office
 - Post-secondary institutions are only successful if their graduates can find employment. Career services offices are responsible for building

relationships with employers and resources to improve the opportunities for students that have completed programming at their institutions.

- Find out from the career services offices what employers they are engaged with and how you can engage with those on campus resources. Also ask them how HVRP can help them and help provide additional services to their students that HVRP may have shared eligibility with.
- Engaging with career services offices can help you, an employment program, initiate impactful conversations with personnel that have vested interest in assisting all their students with obtaining employment, and can result in their staff sharing information about your program and resources with eligible student veterans.

- **Process Flow**

- Here is a simplified process flow for researching secondary educational institutions that are in your area or remote.
 - Begin by using the [VA GI Bill Comparison Tool](#). This will identify schools that accept the GI Bill benefits. You can also filter by locations or program preferences.
 - Check accreditation and program relevance to ensure that these programs are relevant to the job market and to the veteran's career path.
 - Reviewing veteran services and available supports will also provide information on what the education institution offers. Sometimes for smaller schools there may be dedicated staff members that work closely with veterans.
 - Creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the school could help streamline the connection between HVRP and the secondary institution.
 - If there are no veteran-specific programs, research alternate resources that meet the needs of the veteran.
- GI Bill Comparison Tool
 - The [VA GI Bill Comparison Tool](#) has helpful search options such as searching by location (city, state, or zip code). You can also search by school name or program type. You can also apply filters for tuition assistance, vocational training, and certification programs.
 - Other important key features include being able to search for the number of GI Bill users at the school, and well as search for the available benefits and tuition coverage, as well as veteran-specific support programs.
- Veteran services and support
 - Once you have identified the schools that are equipped to serve veterans, now here are the key contacts at the educational institutions.
 - Veteran Services Coordinator or VA Certifying Official
 - These entities assist with GI Bill benefits and enrollment.
 - Career Services and Workforce Development Office

- Helps veterans with career planning, internships, and job placement.
 - Financial Aid Office
 - Provides guidance on additional funding sources beyond the GI Bill.
 - Student Support Services
 - Offers disability accommodations, counseling, and academic support.
 - Local Veterans' Organizations
 - Some schools partner with American Legion or the SVA.
 - Establishing an MOU with a School
 - What is an MOU?
 - An MOU is a formal agreement outlining collaboration between an HVRP grantee and a post-secondary institution.
 - The purpose of an MOU is to define roles and responsibilities for both parties. An MOU also ensures veterans have priority access to training and career resources. If needed, an MOU can also establish reporting and data-sharing protocols (if applicable).
 - Alternative Resources for Schools Without Veteran-Specific Programs
 - When a school lacks a dedicated veterans' program, consider the following possible options to help support the veterans.
 - Community College Workforce Training Centers
 - Many community college workforce training centers offer short-term certifications that qualify for funding.
 - State Workforce Development Agencies
 - May provide free or subsidized training for veterans.
 - Online Veteran-Focused Programs
 - Schools like AMU (American Military University), Purdue Global, and Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) have strong online veteran support.
 - Employer-Sponsored Training
 - Some companies fund veterans to complete specialized training (Amazon, Microsoft, etc.).
 - Trade and Apprenticeship Programs
 - Programs like Helmets to Hardhats or SkillBridge can serve as alternatives.
- **Questions**
 - **Question:** Is there a standardized MOU template?
 - **Answer:** We currently do not have an MOU template but reach out to NVTAC and we can possibly help you with that.

- **Question:** Do you already have existing relationships with post-secondary institutions in your service delivery area, and how did you establish those contacts?
 - **Answer:** In Prescott Arizona, we have a great relationship with our local community college and that was developed by going to our domiciliary group and talking to their outreach person. Now their outreach person comes to our HVRP site several times a month to get people registered with their student ID numbers so they can start signing up for classes. The outreach person also does direct referrals to the veterans' coordinator. He also keeps track of available grants if veterans are looking at a program outside of HVRPs financial capabilities.
 - **Answer:** We make quarterly visits to local colleges.
 - **Answer:** We have a relationship with South Carolina Works and the local DOL training providers with multiple employers that provide training to their newly hired veterans, for example at Boeing and HVAC companies.
 - **Answer:** Goodwill offers a variety of training programs like forklift and warehousing. We work with providers who provide training several for technical school through their facilitation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program and partnership with job and career fairs.
 - **Answer:** Remote training programs are a great idea in general, especially for rural providers as well, that may have transportation challenges.

Conclusion

HVRP providers have the opportunity to build rapport and share resources and information about HVRP with post-secondary institutions. Often, the next step for veterans after leaving the military is returning to school to obtain a degree or certification for civilian employment. This can prove difficult for veterans financially, especially when they are often adult learners trying to juggle employment, families, and their education. This connection with post-secondary institutions will help HVRP providers engage with military-connected students.

For more information on understanding and establishing relationships with post-secondary institutions, you can reach out to your GOTR or email nvtac@dol.gov to request one-on-one technical assistance for your program.

Resources

- [VA College Toolkit: Learn About Student Veterans](#)
- [GI Bill Comparison Tool | Veterans Affairs](#)
- [Veteran Readiness and Employment \(VR&E\) Home](#)
- [Home | Council of College and Military Educators](#)
- [2024 Colleges – Military Times: Best for Vets](#)
- [Veteran-Friendly Schools](#)
- [Post-9/11 GI Bill \(Chapter 33\) | Veterans Affairs](#)

- [Military Tuition Assistance Program: Background and Issues | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)

Here, you can review the [NVTAC HVRP CoP Establishing Relationships with Post-Secondary Institutions](#) March CoP presentation.