National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP): Standard Operating Procedures for HVRP Case Management
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NVTAC Staff

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Key Points

- Introduction
  - NVTAC staff introduced the topic and purpose of today's Community of Practice (CoP): Standard Operating Procedures for HVRP Case Management. 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 requires amendments to their grants.
- What is a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)?
  - An SOP is a document that outlines steps, processes, and expectations of different aspects of an organization's everyday operation. They are essential for continuous service delivery in the event of unexpected circumstances (i.e., turnover, leadership changes). We want to be able pass on important information in a seamless way.
- Case Management Defined:
  - Case management is a collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, care coordination, evaluation, and advocacy for options and services to meet an individual's and family's comprehensive needs through communication and available resources to promote quality, cost-effective outcomes.
  - The role may look different program to program or go by different names, such as employment specialist, etc.
  - The case manager conducts outreach, assesses eligibility, performs intake, and develops individual employment plans (IEP), in addition to referrals/support service connections, job development, supportive services, case coordination (other case managers, employers, training providers, etc.), documentation, data collection, retention, and follow-up.

- SOPs and Case Management
    - SOPs
        - The purpose of an SOP is to ensure high quality and consistency of services for your HVRP, backing that up with quality services for the participants you serve.
        - It is important to ensure compliance with DOL/VETS policies and program requirements and meeting program goals.
    - SOPs should be used to ensure services are high quality.
    - SOPs ensure compliance with DOL policy and requirements and the ability to meet your organization's program goals.
- SOP – Eligibility Assessment and Intake
    - Elements
        - Assessing eligibility
        - Assessing job readiness
        - Collecting required documentation
        - Completing intake forms
        - Collecting data on the veteran
    - Considerations
        - How are you asking questions?
        - What questions are being asked?
            - Is there a better way to ask the questions?
            - Are you using motivational interviewing in a trauma-informed way?
            - Do you have all the information you will be required to include in quarterly reports?
        - What tools will you use?
        - How or where is the data being collected?
            - Are you using an Excel spreadsheet or physical documents?
            - Where can you find them and how are they accessed?
        - What message does the process send to clients?
            - Does the process respect their time, history, goals, and intentions?
        - How are HVRP's purpose and expectations communicated?
            - The goal is to create a process that is seamless, convenient, and respectful for both case manager and client.
- SOP – Referrals and Wrap Around Services
    - Elements
        - Needs assessment
        - Partnerships
            - Examples: housing, Veterans Affairs (VA), legal, mental health, food access
        - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

            - An MOU can streamline the process of creating, maintaining, and tracking relationships with other service providers.
        - Release of Information (ROI)
        - Case conferencing
            - Ensure all teams are on the same page and program goals complement and do not compete with each other.
            - Take the lead in setting up the check-in meetings.
    - Considerations
        - How do you assess needs?
            - What forms do you use and what is the frequency of the check-ins?
        - How are referrals sent?
            - Are you providing a warm handoff?
        - How are referrals tracked?
            - Do you have a procedure for follow-up and tracking of referrals (i.e., engagement trackers)
        - How are relationships with key partners established and maintained?
        - How often do case managers meet with other stakeholders?
            - Consider how your organization can establish itself as a valuable community partner.
- SOP – Job Development
    - SOPs remove guesswork for new and existing staff by providing clear expectations and standardization.
    - Elements
        - IEP
        - Defining goals and methods of the job search
            - Providing definition and use of "SMART" Goals in practice
        - Job training
        - Soft skills
        - Documenting placements
    - Considerations
        - How are documents formatted?
        - How are assessments completed (support services, training)?
            - For example, a questionnaire or interview conducted by Job Developer.
        - Is data required for quarterly reporting being captured?
        - How is the job search conducted and what is the level of involvement?
            - Determine the acceptable level of involvement for case managers and whether the process is standardized or on a case-by-case basis.
        - What elements are considered in the job search?
            - Suggestion: Maintain a list of considerations for all Job Developers or include these questions as a standardized part of the assessment process (i.e., How long of a commute are you willing to have? Do

you currently use any illegal substances that would show up in a drug screening?)

    - Important checks
        - Create a checklist before the search begins.
    - Methods/documents required to confirm placements and retention
        - Ensure the organizational policy meets DOL's requirements.
    - Procedure for making and maintaining a relationship with employers
        - For example, creating a list of employers, contact information, follow-up efforts, attrition (retirement, turnover) that is available for everyone that interfaces with employers.
- SOP – Follow-Up and Retention
  - Elements
    - Post-placement communication with clients and employers
        - SOPs should define the frequency of follow-up to ensure the program receives regular communications from clients and employers and policy for what can happen if communication stops after the veteran gets a job.
    - Tracking retention
    - Collecting required documents or verifying employment
        - Define standards for the documents you will or will not accept as proof of employment.
    - Retention activities staff will conduct
    - Continued support staff will provide
  - Considerations
    - How often are case managers required to check in with each participant?
        - Is there a set standard or is it on a case-by-case basis?
    - How is employment verified?
        - Define the procedure for collecting verification documents.
    - Can incentives be used?
        - Speak with your GOTR about what form of supportive services or assistance is available to veterans once they are employed. Also, verify whether incentives are allowable according to your budget narrative to maintain retention.
    - What supports are allowable post placement?
        - Check with your GOTR about whether you are approved to provide financial assistance after they are exited.
    - How can case managers support client success?
        - What kinds of continued support are available to clients and employers?
- SOP – Documentation and Compliance
  - Elements
    - Recording activities

        - Ensuring proper storage
        - Maintaining confidentiality
        - Preparing for audit
    - Considerations
        - How are activities tracked?
            - Does your organization use digital or physical files?
        - How are documents secured?
            - Define internal standards for data security (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Personally Identifiable Information (PII)?
        - What is in a complete client case file?
            - Create a checklist of expected items for consistency.
        - How are files audited?
            - Define your organization's procedures to stay audit-ready by self-reviewing case files.
- SOP – Other Specific Topics
    - Crisis Management
        - Define the roles and responsibilities of HVRP staff in the case of an emergency. This could be an HVRP-specific SOP or follow company standards.
        - Prepare for unexpected circumstances – participant crisis or emergency (fire, weather).
        - HVRP case managers are not clinicians and should not act as such, but all individuals have a responsibility to act if an individual is a danger to themselves or others.
            - Organizational policy should define limits and expectations for managing a veteran in crisis.
        - Maintain available resources to refer clients to as needed for counseling and support to avoid crisis, and immediately available resources in the case of a crisis.
        - Define key contacts for each client (i.e., social worker, housing case manager, therapist) and establish permissions for contact through the ROI.
        - Keep staff up to date on emergency protocols.
            - Yearly VA S.A.V.E. Trainings for staff.
- Financial Support Tracking
    - Define policies and procedures for providing and documenting financial support to clients.
        - Ensure this policy aligns with your HVRP contract and approved budget narrative.
            - Example: Does your organization define a limit to the amount of support per participant, or does it depend on the veteran's chosen career/training required?

- Establish procedures to ensure compliance with DOL/VETS policy.
  - For example, purchasing gas-only cards that cannot be used to purchase other items.
- Identify a place and method for tracking purchases.

- Other Specific Topics: Conclusion
  - Make sure SOPs are updated as things evolve with best practices or as you encounter new situations or problems.

Questions

- **Question:** Do you have any examples and/or tips on how you have created SOPs for case management purposes?
  - **Answer:** Case plan reviews, meeting with clients on a set schedule based on their level of need, and telling clients from the beginning that HVRP requires follow-up.
  - **Answer:** Our program uses incentives (as allowed in their budget narrative) and monthly resource events to incentivize veterans to stay in contact. We host resource providers from the community to share about their programs and have food and merchandise donated by local groups (i.e., churches, VA, businesses).
  - **Answer:** I use the glossary of terms as my SOP and have a smaller SOP for who can get funds, how much, and for what—so clients do not feel we are favoring one over the other.
  - **Answer:** Make sure to collect information for quarterly reports. We wait to enter clients into the VETS Grantee Reporting System (VGRS). Case managers turn over case files to the data entry staff who ensure case file is complete before adding. We use VGRS as an accountability tool.
  - **Answer:** We use a digital (data entry and database) that houses case notes, spending, paperwork, and expense documentation. We ensure the participant receipt is signed by a client to confirm they are receiving the item.
  - **Answer:** We keep folders on the shared drive, and we have a folder called “tools.” The client must sign a form that they received the card, and we even take a picture of them with the gift card.
  - **Answer:** Right now, we have the client sign that they received the card. We remind them that if they use it for anything other than fuel, they may be dropped from future assistance. Then we request the receipt showing the pump it was purchased on.
- **Question:** What do you mean by third-party verification? How can we use the Work Number? I thought Work Number was for banks or for local government programs (government assistance eligibility).
  - **Answer:** Please watch the NVTAC Quick Guide Microlearning: HVRP Verification of Employment for more information on employment

verification. Be sure to check with your GOTR to discuss if it is an allowable cost or if it requires an amendment to your approved plan.

- **Question:** Has anyone found fuel-only gift cards? What are tips on where to get them?
    - **Answer:** Speedway has fuel-only options.
    - **Answer:** Shell and Chevron
    - **Answer:** Valero
    - **Answer:** Shell does, and they also said write on the card "fuel only"
    - **Answer:** If I have a concern, I meet the client at the gas station and use the card to fill their tank.
    - **Answer:** I utilize WAWA gift cards for gas and incentives because you cannot purchase alcohol or tobacco products from those cards.
    - **Answer:** During an audit, the issue came up with gas cards for clients and it was recommended that we do not buy cards. Their policy is now to meet clients at the gas station.
    - **Answer:** We use Tremendous to send gas cards virtually to clients to use on their phones
        - How do you ensure they are only buying gas with the tremendous gift cards?
            - **Answer:** We use a supportive service form that requires signing acknowledgement that they are only allowed to use it on certain things
- **Question:** Are glasses an allowable expense? A client needed glasses to see at work but did not have insurance. HVRP still couldn't help. Have other programs had a similar situation?
    - **Answer:** That depends on what was approved in your budget narrative. Contact your GOTR for any questions on allowable costs or activities.

Conclusion

HVRP grant recipients are required to have an SOP, as stated in the Terms and Conditions. Last month's CoP session covered SOPs for HVRP operations, including creating a systematic and streamlined approach for HVRP service delivery. This CoP session included SOPs for case management, including eligibility, referrals, job development, follow-up and retention, documentation, and more.

For more information on SOPs, you can reach out to your GOTR or email nvtac@dol.gov to request one-on-one technical assistance for your program.