



National Veterans'
Technical Assistance Center

Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP): Health and Wellness, Education, and Employment Benefits for Veterans

Virtual Learning Course Series 7,
Session 2 of 3

June 5, 2025

Reminder



HVRP best practices will be shared during this session. The National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (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.

Agenda

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Education Benefits
- Employment Benefits
- GI Bill Comparison Tool
- Resources
- Closing

Physical Health

Common Physical Health Conditions (1 of 2)

- Combat-related (traumatic) injuries, such as traumatic brain injuries (TBI), loss of limb or sensory organs, burns, etc.
- Most common chronic conditions, however, are due to disease, which varies based on gender, age, socioeconomic factors, histories of smoking and alcohol use, or the use of drugs.
- The following is the list of the most prevalent conditions, as reported in a study conducted by [UnityPoint Health](#):
 - Amyloidosis (AL) – Often associated with the exposure to herbicides
 - Brucellosis – Common in Gulf War veterans
 - Hodgkin's Disease – Also attributed to exposure to herbicides

Common Physical Health Conditions (2 of 2)

- Common Physical Health Conditions (continued)
 - Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) – Aggressive neurodegenerative disease, linked to military service among other causal factors
 - Parkinson's Disease – Again, connected to herbicide exposure
 - TBI – Common in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF), and New Dawn veterans. Typically caused by close-contact exposure to explosions or highly concussive incidents
 - Prostate cancer – More prevalent in veterans of the Korean War and Vietnam who were exposed to herbicides
 - Physical impacts of depression – All veterans/non-veterans susceptible
 - Respiratory cancers – Attributed to exposure to particulates, dust, chemicals, and smoke during deployment, particularly in the Gulf and Afghanistan
 - Musculoskeletal ailments – Military service can take a toll on a body. Approximately 60 percent of veterans have been diagnosed with some form of musculoskeletal issues, such as joint or back disorders

How to Access US Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care (1 of 2)



- Eligible veterans are entitled to free health care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Accessing the VA Health Benefits Administration (VBA) benefits is simple. There are four options for applying for health care benefits:
 - **Option 1:** Apply by phone. Veterans can call the toll-free hotline between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET), Monday through Friday at 877-222-8387.
 - **Option 2:** Apply by mail. Veterans can fill out an Application for Health Benefits, [VA Form 10-10EZ](#), and mail it to:
Health Eligibility Center
PO Box 5207
Janesville, Wisconsin, 53547-5207

How to Access US Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care (2 of 2)



- Applying for VA health care benefits (continued):
 - **Option 3:** Apply in person. Veterans can download and complete the VA Form 10-10EZ and take it to their nearest VA medical center (VAMC) or Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC).
 - **Option 4:** Apply with the help of a trained professional. Veterans can work with accredited attorneys, claims agents, or veteran service organizations with the help of a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) through their county, state, or other veteran organization, such as Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the American Legion, or Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) post.

Alternatives to VA Health Centers in Emergency Situations (1 of 5)

- VA Health Centers are outstanding resources for primary care, specialty appointments, or expected situations, but in the event of a medical emergency, a VAMC or CBOC may be too far away to be reasonable options.
- If a veteran feels that their life or health is in danger, they should call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.
 - Approval from the VA is not required before going to an emergency department.
 - However, certain rules must be adhered to in order for the VA to cover the cost of the veteran's care.

Alternatives to VA Health Centers in Emergency Situations (2 of 5)

- Non-VA emergency department visit rules:
 - The facility **MUST** be an emergency department – A facility that has the staff and equipment to provide emergency care, such as a hospital emergency room or standalone emergency facility.
 - Urgent care facilities do not qualify as emergency departments.
 - The VA **MUST** be notified of the visit within 72 hours of when care starts. The VA prefers that the provider notify the VA, but if they do not, the veteran or someone acting on their behalf can do it.
 - Certain requirements must be met for veterans not enrolled in VA health care:
 - In most cases, the emergency care and up to 90 days of related services will be covered, even if the veteran is not enrolled in VA health care.

Alternatives to VA Health Centers in Emergency Situations (3 of 5)

- Non-VA emergency department visit rules (continued):
 - Requirements for veterans not enrolled in VA health care (continued):
 - If the health care provider or trained crisis responder determines the veteran is at-risk of immediate self-harm, the VA can provide or cover the cost of care if they meet at least one of the following:
 - The veteran was sexually assaulted, battered, or harassed while serving in the armed forces, OR
 - The veteran served on active duty for more than 24 months and did not receive a dishonorable discharge, OR
 - The veteran served more than 100 days under a combat exclusion or in support of a contingency operation (National Guard or Reserve) and did not get a dishonorable discharge.
 - The veteran should immediately let emergency department staff know about their veteran status and request the VA be notified immediately.

Alternatives to VA Health Centers in Emergency Situations (4 of 5)

- Non-VA emergency department visit rules (continued):
 - General eligibility requirements:
 - The VA can only cover the cost of a veteran's non-VA emergency department care if they meet all of the following requirements:
 - The veteran is enrolled in VA health care or have a qualifying exemption from enrollment, and
 - A VA health care facility or other federal facility that could provide the needed care was not “feasibly available,” meaning it was too far away to get there fast enough for the required medical care, and
 - A person with an average knowledge of health and medicine (a “prudent layperson”) would reasonably believe that a delayed care would have endangered the life or health of the veteran in danger, and
 - All other above requirements are met.
 - **NOTE:** The VA will only cover the non-VA emergency care until the veteran can be safely transferred to a VA or other appropriate federal facility – UNLESS the provider contacts the VA and the transfer cannot be accepted.

Alternatives to VA Health Centers in Emergency Situations (5 of 5)



- If a veteran is charged for non-VA emergency department care, and the veteran reasonably believes the VA should have covered the cost, have the veteran call the VA at 877-881-7618 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Mental Health

Common Mental Health Concerns Among Veterans

- According to the VA, over 1.7 million veterans received specialized treatment in VA mental health programs in fiscal year 2018. Some of the most prevalent concerns were:
 - Anxiety disorders
 - Depression
 - Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Schizophrenia and bipolar disorder
 - Stress
 - Substance abuse disorder
 - Suicide prevention

Negative Stigma of Seeking Mental Health Services

- Veterans are often afraid of seeking mental health services, worried about seeming like they are, in some fashion, broken or unfit.
- This negative stigma is often a barrier to veterans seeking treatment, regardless of the source – internally generated by the veteran or externally generated by others who view veterans as volatile, emotionally scarred, or “dangerous and violent.”
- Help combat these stigmas by reassuring our veterans that it is okay to NOT be okay.

Mental Health Services

- Mental health services are available in VA's mental health specialty clinics, CBOCs, and VAMCs.
- Most of the larger VAMC facilities, VA staff has integrated mental health staff as part of their Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACTs), allowing for services for PTSD, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse treatment without requiring separate consultations with mental health providers outside of the PACTs.
- The Veterans Crisis Line is available 24/7 to provide confidential crisis support for veterans whether or not they are enrolled in VA health benefits or health care. Dial 988, then Press 1. Veterans can also [Chat Online](#), or Text 838255 to connect to someone. This is available to ALL veterans, regardless of enrollment status in VA health care.

Other Mental Health Resources (1 of 3)



- [VA S.A.V.E.](#) is a training program that provides a helpful way to remember a step-by-step method of helping veterans experiencing suicidal thoughts. S.A.V.E. is offered through PsychArmor, which we will discuss shortly.
- **S: Signs.** Know the signs that indicate a veteran might be thinking about suicide.
- **A: Ask.** Ask the uncomfortable question. “Are you thinking of killing yourself?” (Don’t ask questions that seek a “no” response, such as “You aren’t thinking of killing yourself, are you?”)
- **V: Validate.** Validate the veteran’s experience and listen with empathy.
- **E: Encourage.** Encourage the veteran to seek treatment and expedite the process of connecting the veteran to resources, such as the crisis line or a community mental health professional.

Other Mental Health Resources (2 of 3)



- [PsychArmor](#) is a nationally recognized nonprofit training provider that provides military cultural awareness training to members of the military-connected community and anyone who wishes to engage with veterans or military-connected people.
- PsychArmor provides training options for employees, board members, and volunteers, offering flexible course delivery methods for online courses.
- Courses are available for community members, educators and school personnel, employers and human resources professionals, health care providers, caregivers, spouses, nonprofit leaders, and much more.

Other Mental Health Resources (3 of 3)



- Some of the courses available on PsychArmor include:
 - Military Culture Series
 - Women Veterans Series
 - Respite for Military and Veteran Caregivers
 - Suicide Prevention for Military-Connected Youth
 - VA S.A.V.E. Training
 - Firearm Safety and Suicide Prevention
 - Caring for Veterans Through the End of Life
 - And much more!

How to Recognize a Veteran in Crisis

(1 of 2)



- While it is not our primary duty to be clinicians for veterans who are experiencing a mental health crisis, it is **EVERYONE'S** responsibility to understand the warning signs and be able to take appropriate actions.
- **NOTHING** we do is more important than the preservation of the life we are interacting with! This may mean veterans who are participants in your program or anyone, veteran or not, who you know personally.

How to Recognize a Veteran in Crisis (2 of 2)

- Warning signs:
 - Talking about feelings of hopelessness or having no reason to live
 - Expressing thoughts of self-harm or suicide
 - Withdrawing from family, friends, or society
 - Increased substance (drugs or alcohol) use
 - Dramatic mood swings or outbursts
 - Giving away possessions or saying goodbye
 - Sleeping too little or too much
 - Expressing feelings of overwhelming guilt, shame, or worthlessness
- REMEMBER – No statement about suicidal thoughts or ideations should be dismissed as a joke or not be taken seriously.

Mental Health Resources for Veterans that do not qualify for VA Health Care

- [988 Lifeline](#)
- [Cohen Veterans Network](#)
- [Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics \(CCBHC\)](#)
- [Federally Qualified Health Centers \(FQHC\)](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [CMHSP Directory – CMHAM – Community Mental Health Association of Michigan](#)
- Other resources:
 - Faith-based counseling
 - Support groups
 - Public libraries or community centers
 - University-based counseling

VA Education Benefits

GI Bill (1 of 2)

- The primary education benefit that most people are familiar with is the GI Bill. The GI Bill offers varying degrees of education benefit to veterans and their family members under certain circumstances, and there are several different types of GI Bill that your program participants may have available to them, based on their situation. The GI Bill offers 36 months (and up to 48 months for those that paid into the Montgomery GI Bill without utilizing it).
 - The Post-9/11 (Forever) GI Bill offers education assistance for undergraduate degree programs, graduate programs, certification programs, registered apprenticeship opportunities, and more for veterans. It can also be transferred, prior to separation from the military, to spouses and children of veterans for use at post-secondary institutions or private schools for high school age children.
- The percentage of tuition that the GI Bill will cover is dependent on the amount of active service each veteran has accrued, from 40 percent to 100 percent.

GI Bill (2 of 2)

- The GI Bill is not limited to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, however. There are other options that may apply to your veterans:
 - Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (MGIB-AD) (Chapter 30) is available to veterans who served during certain eras for at least two years.
 - Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) (Chapter 1606) is a possible resource for Reserve members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps or Coast Guard, and members of the Army and Air National Guard.
 - Dependents' Education Assistance (DEA) (Chapter 35) is available for dependent spouses and children of veterans who have died, are captured or missing, or are permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability.
 - For more information on the GI Bill benefits for which your participants may be eligible, visit [About GI Bill Benefits | Veterans Affairs](#).

Federal and State Tuition Assistance



- For service members who are still engaged with the military, they may qualify for Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) or state tuition assistance which varies from state to state.
- Some states offer free tuition to state colleges and universities for veterans.

Veterans Readiness and Employment

- Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E) (Chapter 31), formerly referred to simply as Voc Rehab, is a VA benefit that is not specifically for education, but it does provide up to 48 months of education benefits for veterans who have a service-connected disability and meet certain qualifications. VR&E provides opportunities for college education, assistance with independent living, entrepreneurial opportunities, and more.
- Utilizing VR&E does NOT impact veterans' GI Bill usage, but the VR&E benefits MUST be utilized first.
- For more information, visit [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov). We will also discuss VR&E more during the Employment section of this presentation.

Timelines for Usage of Education Benefits



- For veterans who separated on or before December 31, 2012, there is a 15-year delimitation date from the time of separation for using the GI Bill.
- For veterans who separated on or after January 1, 2013, there is no cut-off date for using their GI Bill benefits, as outlined in the [Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2017 \(Public Law 115-422\)](#), commonly referred to as the “Forever GI Bill.”
- Veterans interested in receiving benefits through VR&E typically have 12 years from the date they receive their first notices of disability ratings from the VA, except under specific circumstances.

Barriers to Education

- There may be some significant barriers to education for veterans interested in furthering their careers post-military. Some of those may be:
 - Family responsibilities
 - Work
 - PTSD
 - Feelings of isolation on-campus (age, military service)
 - Technology
 - Ignorance of the benefits for which they are eligible

Education Support Services

- While there are many challenges for student veterans that may make success difficult, there are also a lot of support systems to assist more experienced learners manage the challenges of returning to school.
- Campus career centers
- Student veteran groups
 - [Student Veterans of America \(SVA\)](#)
 - [Peer Advisors for Veteran Education \(PAVE\)](#)
- On-Campus veteran centers
- School Certifying Officials (SCO)
- Offices of Campus Life

Employment Benefits

Employment Benefits and Statistics

(1 of 2)

- One of the challenges for veterans after they leave the military is struggling with finding gainful employment that can meet the financial needs of living in the civilian world.
- According to the [U.S. Department of Labor's \(DOL\) latest numbers](#), between May 2024 and April 2025, however, veteran unemployment was slightly lower than unemployment among non-veterans as a whole.
 - Veterans with a disability – 6.5 percent
 - Nonveterans with a disability – 7.8 percent
 - Veterans with no disability – 2.8 percent
 - Nonveterans with no disability – 3.8 percent
- However, this is for all veterans and does not take gender into consideration.

Employment Benefits and Statistics

(2 of 2)

- In looking at the differences in unemployment between veterans and non-veterans by gender, in April 2025, the highest population of unemployed job-ready Americans was women veterans:
 - Women veterans – 5.9 percent
 - Women nonveterans – 3.3 percent
 - Male veterans – 3.1 percent
 - Male nonveterans – 4.1 percent
- NOTE: these rates are seasonally adjusted for individuals aged 18 years and over in the civilian non-institutional population.

Transition Assistance Resources

(1 of 2)

- For veterans who are entered into your program and still serving in the National Guard or Reserves within 180 days of separation and have met the qualifications for active-duty service, they **may** qualify for DOD SkillBridge.
- SkillBridge is an opportunity for service members to gain civilian work experience through industry specific training, apprenticeships, or internships during their last 180 days of service. It connects service members with real-world job experiences and provides opportunities to learn while still serving.
- To qualify, the service member must be granted 180 days of permissive duty to focus solely on training full-time, with written approval from their chain of command.
- Veterans can locate SkillBridge opportunities here: [DOD SkillBridge Program – Find a SkillBridge Opportunity](#)

Transition Assistance Resources

(2 of 2)

- Another opportunity that is available for veterans is [DOD Credentialing Opportunities On-Line \(COOL\)](#), which is a collaborative product between branches of service to match military occupations to civilian credentials, such as:
 - Occupational certifications
 - Licenses
 - Apprenticeships
- Each branch has its own COOL website, and your veterans should explore their branches' sites for more information about their individual situations.

Veteran Workforce Development Support Programs (1 of 2)

- DOL Resources
 - HVRP
 - Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)
 - American Job Centers (AJC)
- VA Resources
 - VR&E
 - [Veterans Employment Toolkit](#)
 - [VA Community Employment Coordinators](#)
 - [Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services \(HVCES\)](#)

Veteran Workforce Development Support Programs (2 of 2)

- Other resources:
 - [O*Net Interest Profiler](#)
 - [Veteran and Military Transition Center](#)
 - [My Next Move for Vets](#)
 - [Hire Heroes USA](#)
 - [Paralyzed Veterans of America's Veterans Career Program](#)
 - [VA for Vets](#)
 - [The National Resource Directory](#)
 - [Veterans Opportunity to Work](#)

VR&E For Employment

- VR&E, as discussed, is not primarily an education benefit. It is intended to provide vocational rehabilitation services to veterans who have service-connected disabilities that create barriers to finding and maintaining suitable employment.
 - Suitable employment refers to jobs that are in safe environments that are sustainable and do not further exacerbate a veteran's disability.
- VR&E can provide supports to assist veterans with certifications or degree programs to assist them with obtaining employment or can assist with entrepreneurial opportunities and guidance for the right veterans with the right business plans.

GI Bill Comparison Tool

GI Bill Comparison Tool (1 of 2)

- Finding appropriate post-secondary education or training opportunities can be difficult for veterans. However, the VA's [GI Bill Comparison Tool](#) makes it easy to locate schools and employers, licenses, certifications, prep courses, and national exams.
- Schools and employers include public, for profit, private, foreign, flight, correspondence schools, high schools, and on-the job training and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Veterans can utilize the tool to find license, certifications, and prep courses that are reimbursable, depending on the nature of the test.
- The tool can also be used to locate national exams that the VA may cover under the GI Bill, such as tests for college or graduate school, teacher training tests, tests for language aptitude, and more.

GI Bill Comparison Tool (2 of 2)

- The GI Bill Comparison Tool can be utilized to locate schools and training resources by location and can be filtered to search only for job-driven training or registered apprenticeship programs, which can assist in locating eligible job-driven training opportunities or even potential employers with whom to establish relationships.
- This can be a useful resource for veterans who are seeking post-secondary education, certifications, training resources, or employment.

Resources (1 of 3)

- [10 Common Medical Conditions in Veterans](#)
- [About VA Form 10-10EZ | Veterans Affairs](#)
- [Chat | Veterans Crisis Line](#)
- [VA S.A.V.E.](#)
- [Psycharmor](#)
- [About GI Bill Benefits | Veterans Affairs](#)
- [Eligibility For Veteran Readiness And Employment | Veterans Affairs](#)
- [STATUTE-132-Pg5450.pdf](#)

Resources (2 of 3)

- [Homepage – Student Veterans of America®](#)
- [Partner Campuses – Peer Advisors for Veteran Education \(PAVE\)](#)
- [Veteran Unemployment Rates | U.S. Department of Labor](#)
- [DOD SkillBridge Program – Find a SkillBridge Opportunity](#)
- [DOD COOL Portal – Homepage](#)
- [Veterans Employment Toolkit](#)
- [VA Community Employment Coordinators](#)
- [Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services \(HVCES\)](#)
- [GI Bill Comparison Tool](#)

Resources (3 of 3)

- [Cohen Veterans Network](#)
- [Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics \(CCBHC\)](#)
- [Federally Qualified Health Centers \(FQHC\)](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [CMHSP Directory – CMHAM – Community Mental Health Association of Michigan](#)
- [988 Lifeline – If you need emotional support, reach out to the national mental health hotline: 988](#)



Questions?

Thank you!

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