

**National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC)  
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Community of Practice (CoP)  
Addressing Barriers and Advocacy for Employment Success  
Thursday, May 28, 2026**

## **NVTAC Staff**

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## **Key Points**

- **Introduction**
  - NVTAC staff reminded attendees that while best practices would be discussed during the presentation, grant recipients should consult with their Grant Officer's Technical Representative (GOTR) before implementing any new strategies or activities.
  - The session focused on addressing common barriers that impact participant employment success and retention.
  - Participants explored practical approaches to barrier reduction, participant-centered advocacy, and partnership development.
  - The session emphasized that addressing barriers is not separate from employment work, but rather a critical component of successful placement and retention outcomes.
- **Understanding Barriers in HVRP**
  - Common barriers discussed included transportation challenges, housing instability, justice involvement, behavioral health needs, physical health limitations, substance use recovery, limited technology access, employment gaps, and documentation issues.
  - Participants acknowledged that many veterans experience multiple barriers simultaneously.
  - The discussion reinforced that barriers should be viewed through a problem-solving lens rather than as obstacles that prevent employment progress.
  - Identifying barriers early allows staff to develop more effective employment and service strategies.
- **Barrier Navigation Starts with Trust**
  - Building trust and rapport was identified as the foundation of successful case management and employment services.
  - Participants were encouraged to meet veterans where they are, both physically and emotionally.
  - Motivational interviewing and active listening were discussed as effective engagement techniques.

- Focusing on immediate needs and creating early successes helps increase participant engagement and buy-in.
- Veterans are more likely to participate when they feel heard, respected, and involved in decision-making.
- **Transportation Barriers**
  - Transportation challenges remain one of the most common barriers reported by HVRP grant recipients.
  - Common issues include lack of reliable transportation, rising transportation costs, documentation barriers, and long commute times.
  - Potential solutions discussed included transportation assistance, bus passes, gas cards, ride-share partnerships, and coordination with local transportation providers.
  - Participants were encouraged to explore employer partnerships that may help address transportation challenges.
  - Matching veterans with employment opportunities closer to home can improve retention outcomes.
- **Housing Instability and Employment**
  - Housing instability can significantly impact a participant's ability to secure and maintain employment.
  - Common challenges include shelter instability, frequent moves, lack of safe storage for belongings, communication difficulties, and ongoing housing crises.
  - Immediate co-enrollment with housing providers such as Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) was highlighted as a best practice.
  - Warm handoffs between agencies help improve participant engagement and service coordination.
  - Stabilization and employment planning can occur simultaneously rather than sequentially.
- **Justice Involvement and Employment**
  - Justice involvement remains a significant barrier for many veterans seeking employment.
  - Challenges discussed included employer concerns regarding background checks, probation requirements, employment gaps, and reduced self-confidence.
  - Participants were encouraged to develop relationships with probation officers, parole officers, veteran treatment courts, and justice system partners.
  - Building relationships with second-chance employers was identified as an important strategy for expanding employment opportunities.
  - Strengths-based language can help employers focus on participant skills, growth, and readiness for employment rather than solely on past justice involvement.
- **Behavioral Health and Physical Health Challenges**
  - Veterans may experience mental health concerns, substance use recovery needs, chronic health conditions, stress, and burnout.

- Participants discussed the importance of coordinated referral systems and strong partnerships with treatment providers.
- Staff were encouraged to promote treatment engagement and recovery support in a non-stigmatizing manner.
- Trauma-informed approaches were emphasized as an important component of service delivery.
- HVRP staff play a critical role in connecting veterans to appropriate treatment and support services.
- **Participant-Centered Advocacy**
  - Advocacy efforts should be driven by participant choice and self-determination.
  - Participants were encouraged to seek permission before advocating on a veteran's behalf.
  - Veterans should be provided with information and options that allow them to make informed decisions.
  - Advocacy should occur alongside the participant rather than for the participant whenever possible.
  - Staff were encouraged to ask participants what success looks like, what barriers they identify, and what level of support they prefer.
- **Strengthening Partnerships**
  - Strong partnerships were identified as essential to addressing barriers and improving employment outcomes.
  - Key partnerships discussed included VA programs, SSVF providers, American Job Centers (AJCs), Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists, behavioral health providers, treatment facilities, probation and parole offices, community colleges, training providers, employers, and apprenticeship programs.
  - Resource mapping and relationship-building before a crisis occurs can improve responsiveness and service coordination.
  - Immediate co-enrollment systems and regular case conferencing were highlighted as effective partnership practices.
- **Quick Wins and Practical Strategies**
  - Small, manageable changes can have a significant impact on program outcomes.
  - Participants were encouraged to create transportation resource sheets and resource directories that identify both services and key contacts.
  - Developing formal warm handoff procedures can improve participant engagement and service access.
  - Weekly case conferencing with support service providers can improve coordination and communication.
  - Sharing employer leads across staff was identified as a strategy to strengthen placement efforts.
  - Bringing current job leads to staff meetings and maintaining a "hot jobs" board can help keep employment opportunities visible and actionable.

- Consistent participant follow-up systems, including tracking tools and calendar reminders, were discussed as characteristics of high-performing programs.
- **Peer Discussion and Promising Practices**
  - Participants shared challenges related to probation requirements, employer restrictions, and barriers faced by justice-involved veterans.
  - Discussion highlighted the value of second-chance employers and creative employment strategies for veterans with criminal backgrounds.
  - Participants emphasized the importance of building strong relationships with workforce agencies, employers, probation and parole officers, and community partners.
  - Examples were shared of direct employer outreach, workforce center engagement, and collaborative efforts to increase employment opportunities for veterans.
  - Participants reinforced the value of peer learning and information-sharing across HVRP programs.
- **Questions and Answers (Q&A)**
  - Participants engaged in discussion regarding justice-involved veterans, second-chance employment opportunities, employer engagement, and partnership development.
  - Participants discussed the importance of maintaining strong relationships with employers, workforce agencies, and support service providers.
  - The session encouraged continued collaboration and peer-to-peer sharing of effective practices.

## Conclusion

Addressing barriers is a core component of successful employment and retention strategies within the HVRP. Through participant-centered advocacy, strong partnerships, effective resource coordination, and practical problem-solving approaches, grant recipients can help veterans overcome challenges and move toward sustainable employment. The session emphasized the importance of trust-building, collaboration, warm handoffs, co-enrollment opportunities, and consistent follow-up. Grant recipients were encouraged to strengthen community partnerships, expand resource networks, and continue implementing practical strategies that support veterans in achieving their employment goals.