

At Your Service**Snapshot of Service****No Soldier Left Behind – Mentorship and Community Building**

According to Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantees working with homeless veterans, the transition from military to civilian life can sometimes be challenging. For some veterans, the struggle to reintegrate is complicated by health issues and other factors which may lead to homelessness. For veterans experiencing homelessness and seeking employment, creating a peer network of other veterans helps combat feelings of isolation and increases long-term success. HVRP grantees use a variety of techniques to build connection among participants and within the larger community, surrounding participants with a network of support.

Many HVRP grantees use peer meeting groups to bring clients together. Darryl Harper of Career and Recovery Resources Inc. in Houston, TX hosts a monthly job club where clients can network with other participants, learn new strategies, and discuss challenges in their search for employment. Former participants are often featured as guest speakers, providing real life success stories and encouragement to their peers.

In addition to strong peer relationships, homeless veterans need a network of community providers to address employment barriers and provide support. Connecting veterans to the VA and the many health-care and treatment resources it provides is essential. Mr. Harper stressed the importance of building relationships with specific contacts at the local VA to make the referral process more efficient and seamless for clients.

For Linda Chase of Easter Seals Oregon, establishing a network of community providers is essential, allowing her to make referrals for supportive services based on each client's need. She builds client confidence by emphasizing the "team" of providers supporting them step-by-step through the employment process.

While the specific strategies may vary from one program to another, one consistent theme appears across programs: creating a network of support for homeless veterans ensures that "no one gets left behind."