

At Your Service**Snapshot of Service****Making the Connection: Serving Younger Veterans**

Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantees serve veterans experiencing homelessness who have wide gender, race, ethnicity, age and other demographic differences. As they build employment plans with veterans, HVRP grantee staff members take these differences into account. In recent years, many HVRP grantees have reported increased numbers of young veterans accessing HVRP services. As these numbers continues to grow, all HVRP grantees will need to deepen their competency in providing outreach, services, and follow-up to this subpopulation of veterans.

Younger veterans often experience homelessness differently than their older counterparts (e.g. couch-surfing with family and friends), and may be less likely to reach out for assistance as a result. Linda Chase of Easter Seals Oregon has found younger veterans with dependent families are more likely to reach out for assistance than those without family obligations. She believes that many younger veterans perceive asking for help as a weakness and do so only as a last resort.

Ms. Chase has also noticed generational differences in veteran skill sets and approaches to employment. Many of the younger veterans have extensive skills and experience in technology and are looking for employment in tech-related fields. In her experience, younger veterans are also more likely to remain in a position and work to advance in their careers. In contrast, many older veterans with long histories of unemployment are quick to pursue other opportunities when a position is not working out.

Lee Vartigian of the Albany Housing Coalition has adapted his outreach efforts to find younger veterans who are homeless. While he still includes traditional outreach strategies such as connecting with the VA and visiting local shelters, Mr. Vartigian has found great success using Facebook and other social media to reach and stay connected with younger veterans. He also relies heavily on word of mouth and referrals from within the military community, especially from former supervising officers who often follow and shepherd their former soldiers' careers.

By adapting to the specific needs of each veteran, or group of veterans, HVRP grantees can help ease the transition from the military to civilian life. ***Targeted engagement strategies help HVRP grantees make the connection to younger veterans experiencing homelessness.***