

# Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program

## Best Practice Profiles of Employment Assistance Programs

*Produced by*



**NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS**

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## Introduction

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This publication was produced by the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). It contains profiles of some of the nation's most effective homeless veteran employment assistance programs, and is designed to inform community-based organizations and government agencies about the essential components of a comprehensive program that can be replicated and can successfully compete for federal grants. All of the organizations highlighted in this work receive grants under the DOL-VETS Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, and most have served as guideposts for other community-based homeless service providers that have developed employment assistance programs.

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is the only federal program wholly dedicated to providing employment assistance to homeless veterans. HVRP is funded by DOL-VETS in compliance with the requirements of 38 United States Code, Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Section 2021 requires the Secretary of Labor to conduct, directly or through grant or contract, such programs as the Secretary determines appropriate to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force.

HVRP programs fill a special need because they serve veterans who may be shunned by other programs and services because of problems such as severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), long histories of substance abuse, serious psychosocial problems, legal issues, and those who are HIV-positive. These veterans require more time-consuming, specialized, intensive assessment, referrals and counseling than is possible in other programs that work with veterans seeking employment.

The employment focus of HVRP distinguishes it from most other programs for the homeless, which concentrate on more immediate needs such as emergency shelter, food and substance abuse treatment. While these are critical components of any homeless program, and grantees are required to demonstrate that their clients' needs in those areas are met, the objective of HVRP programs is to enable homeless veterans to secure and keep jobs that will allow them to re-enter mainstream society as productive citizens.

### Historical Funding of HVRP Program

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Amount</b> <i>In millions</i>
<b>1996</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>1997</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>\$3.0</b>
<b>1999</b>	<b>\$3.0</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>\$9.5</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>\$16.9</b>
<b>2002</b>	<b>\$17.9</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>\$18.1</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>\$18.8</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>\$20.8</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>\$21.7</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>\$21.8</b>

*Source: DOL-VETS, "Helping End Homelessness Among Veterans,"— Feb. 26, 2007.*

In FY 1996 and 1997, HVRP received no funding from Congress. In FY 1998, Congress authorized \$3 million for the program. In FY 2000, through a competitive application process, DOL-VETS awarded 43 urban HVRP grants and 11 non-urban grants to community-based organizations and government agencies to provide employment and other supportive services to more than 7,800 homeless veterans at a cost of more than \$9.5 million.

The following year, more than \$16.9 million was allocated to fund 42 urban and 11 non-urban second-year grants, while an additional 27 urban grants were added to the list. That year, more than 14,150 homeless veterans received employment assistance and supportive services through the program. In Program Year (PY) 2004, funding was added for the pilot Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program, which prepares veterans for release from correctional facilities and provides employment and housing services to facilitate their successful reintegration into society as productive, self-reliant citizens.

For Program Year 2007, approximately \$21.8 million has been awarded to 82 urban and non-urban HVRP programs, offering employment and supportive services to more than 12,600 homeless veterans. Combined with the \$7.5 million in funding for the Veterans' Workforce Investment Program, a total of 16,000 homeless and at-risk veterans will receive employment preparation and job placement assistance through DOL-VETS grants. The average cost per job placement goal by grantees in FY 2006 was \$2,160, well below the \$2,308 reported in FY 2000; and the FY 2006 successful job placement rate of 72.8% was substantially higher than the 53% reported in FY 2000, a testament to the commendable improvement of grantee performance during the last six years. In Fiscal Year 2007, the Government Accountability Office cited the HVRP program as one of the most effective, efficient federal homeless assistance programs in the nation.

## **Methodology**

NCHV announced the HVRP Best Practices Project after it secured a technical assistance grant through the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service in March 2006. Questionnaires were then mailed to community-based organizations and government agencies that expressed an interest in being considered for participation in the project.

Because of the objectives of the project – to inform service providers about HVRP, the essential components of an employment assistance program, and the competitive grant process – we sought to include representative programs from both urban and rural areas, faith-based and community-based organizations, large and small operations, and government agencies that serve as community service network centers.

Once the participants were selected, information from the questionnaires, follow-up interviews and reports to the Department of Labor was used to compile the program profiles. Organizations and agencies that were selected for inclusion in the project received a modest stipend to offset the administrative cost of their participation.

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# Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Best Practices Project

## Executive Summary

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The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) Best Practices Project was made possible through a partnership between the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) and the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). The objective of the project is to present profiles of successful homeless veteran employment assistance programs funded by DOL-VETS as an information and development resource for community and faith-based organizations and government entities that are planning to implement such programs, or are exploring ways to enhance the programs they already administer.

Compiling the 34 profiles presented in this report required nearly a year of information gathering through questionnaires, interviews and research. Great care was exercised to ensure the inclusion of programs representing the full range of program types – urban, rural, faith-based and community-based organizations, local projects, regional networks, and public agency homeless veteran service providers.

### Critical Universal Program Components

Though the geopolitical locations, organizational structure and populations served by these programs vary widely, there are several critical components that are shared by all HVRP employment assistance programs:

**Community Collaboration** – The HVRP program is designed to serve homeless veterans facing a multitude of barriers to employment, and client needs most often include the entire continuum of care: immediate access to emergency shelter, food, clothing, personal hygiene facilities, medical care, dental care, mental health assessment and services, transitional housing, transportation assistance, personal development counseling, legal aid, and employment readiness and placement services. No single organization or government agency can provide all of these services. Successful HVRP programs enter into contracts or detailed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with local government agencies and community and faith-based service providers to support their employment assistance programs. To their credit, none of the participating organizations in this study dwelled on the importance of these MOUs when competing for and securing federal program grants, even though that is certainly the reality. However, all of them identified network collaboration as the single most effective means of enhancing the quality of services provided by their programs.

**Comprehensive Assessments and Reports** – All HVRP programs utilize client intake assessments and progress reports to identify individual needs and to develop practical individual performance plans. These documents identify the services that are needed to ensure the success of each client. But they also serve as critical planning tools, charting the organization's dependence on the services provided by its partners and the degree to which clients' needs are being met. This information was identified as a critical element

in the planning process and continuous development of even the most experienced HVRP programs. More detailed assessments yield the most valuable client assistance and case management plans. Diligent client progress and outcomes reporting utilizing the Department of Labor Common Measures system attest to the program's success, while certifying the need for available services and the need to expand those services. This information is useful not only for HVRP and internal management purposes, but for participation in regional Continuum of Care planning and applications for other grants.

**Developing Employment Opportunities** – It may seem like stating the obvious, but there is a tremendous difference between preparing someone for the workforce and actually ensuring homeless veteran clients secure gainful employment. Successfully navigating through the immediate barriers to employment – homelessness, poverty, need for vocational training, legal problems and disabilities – is only the beginning. Approaching a potential employer with clients who have compromised work and personal histories is, at best, a herculean challenge. All of the HVRP programs featured in this project ensure success by developing job opportunities for their clients. In some cases, it is through cooperative agreements with local businesses or through subsidized employment and training programs for special needs populations. In some cases, it is through job-specific training at HVRP grantee facilities and subsequent placement, or on-the-job training facilitated by case management and employer support services. Some of the HVRP grantees in this study operate businesses that employ homeless veteran program participants directly, offering them work experience and management training they would otherwise be denied. In all cases, a considerable investment is required to ensure there are jobs for homeless veterans who are working to re-enter the workforce.

## **General Observations**

**Core Partners** – The need for strong collaborative agreements has already been mentioned, but this study demonstrated a special emphasis on specific partners that are absolutely essential to the success of any homeless veteran employment program.

- Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (HVRP, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, Local Veterans Employment Representatives, on-line employment resources).
- Department of Veterans Affairs (Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services).
- Social Security Administration (SSI, SSDI, employment assistance services for disabled workers).
- Faith Community – In many communities and rural areas, these organizations provide a large percentage (if not the majority) of public assistance from private sources. National organizations – such as Volunteers of America, Salvation Army and Catholic Charities – have local programs that work within service provider networks.
- Local Continuum of Care Committees – Essential networking to identify available supportive services and to develop linkages with employers offering job opportunities for special needs populations.
- State Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services Offices.

**Funding Determines Capacity, Not Quality** – All of the HVRP grantees that participated in this project make an earnest effort to extend employment assistance services to as many clients as possible. Training and employment preparation services are often enhanced by program partners, but program objectives and goals are clearly stated in HVRP grant proposals based on the anticipated costs of services provided by the applicant.

A great majority of the organizations in this project reported that they accepted more clients than the number stipulated in their program plans. However, there was no discernable decline in successful employment placements that could be attributed to that extended outreach. Most often, the programs that failed to achieve projected placement goals were impacted by local economic factors, or were working with large groups of homeless veterans facing serious or multiple barriers to employment. The data seems to support what several program administrators claimed during the project: once a sound employment assistance program is developed and implemented, funding levels primarily and directly impact the number of veterans who can be helped, not the quality of the services that are provided.

**HVRP's Impact on Homeless Veteran Services** – All of the organizations that participated in this project offered employment assistance to homeless veterans to some degree before they received HVRP funding. Some have provided those services for more than 30 years. However, the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program has allowed community and faith-based organizations to establish employment assistance as a priority in their service delivery plans. Through this program, DOL-VETS has acknowledged that employment is the key to successful transition from homelessness to a life of self-reliance, dignity and promise.

The program fosters inter-agency and community cooperation among homeless service providers; offers supportive services and vocational training for homeless veterans; and ultimately helps veterans overcome significant barriers to employment and re-enter the workforce as productive citizens. According to some of the program administrators who participated in this project, one of the most important aspects of the HVRP program is that it *requires* successful employment placements for homeless veterans. Fulfilling that requirement necessarily enhances the performance and effectiveness of the entire organization.

*National Coalition for Homeless Veterans  
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## **U.S. Veterans Initiative—Phoenix Victory Place Anchors Region’s Veteran Services**

Before U.S. Veterans Initiative (U.S. VETS) began operations in the Phoenix-Mesa metropolitan area, the only local homeless veteran service group was the Arizona Veterans Coalition. This coalition was not a service provider, but a group of representatives from federal agencies, community-based service providers and veteran service organizations. The group’s goal was to create services in the area for homeless veterans and they were able to secure a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program “Per Diem Only grant,” but how they helped U.S. VETS open a facility in Phoenix is a shining example of effective community collaboration.

By the time it received the VA grant, the Arizona Veterans Coalition had achieved a community commitment to veterans and there were four housing sites, including two facilities operated by Central Arizona Shelter Services (CASS) – East Valley Men’s Shelter and the Bay Club. These four sites, however, did not provide enough beds and presented the possibility that the local non-veteran homeless population may be denied services. The coalition sought a way to develop more beds for homeless veterans and, in their search of best practice programs across the nation, they came across U.S. VETS’ Westside Residence Hall in Inglewood, CA. The coalition pledged its assistance if U.S. VETS would agree to develop a transitional housing and employment services program for veterans in Phoenix.

Site Director Brad Bridwell points out that without the Arizona Veterans Coalition’s support, U.S. VETS-Phoenix’s Victory Place would not have been able to open and succeed so quickly. U.S. VETS has as one of its core values that the organization will “collaborate in everything and be redundant in nothing.” And the key trends in the relationships that have driven the organization’s Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program’s (HVRP) success in Phoenix are identifying supportive service providers, communicating often with them, and providing intense follow-up to strengthen partnerships.

Authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access employment training and placement assistance. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), and is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans. No matter how successful, providers must reapply as a first-year program every three years. The HVRP grant program is extremely competitive; fewer than half the organizations that apply for the program receive funding.

The Director of Veterans Employment and Training (DVET) has influence over all Department of Labor operations in the Phoenix region, and Bridwell notes that Michael Espinosa, DVET for Arizona, has played an important role in the collaborations of the Phoenix site of U.S. VETS by going above and beyond the call of duty as a partner pushing for its HVRP success.

U.S. VETS-Phoenix worked diligently to develop cooperative agreements with agencies and individuals that possessed a sincere and demonstrated interest in providing and supporting veteran services, and educated those who did not yet see the importance of this endeavor.

Bridwell asserts that veteran-specific programs existing in a community will positively affect the homeless services community in general. The Maricopa Continuum of Care, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) homeless program, initially invested \$500,000 to bring U.S. VETS to Phoenix. The site is now bringing in \$1.7 million to invest in homeless veteran services each year, which also includes HVRP funds. Because the community was willing to make veterans a priority, there is now an additional \$1.2 million in HUD funds going toward serving the homeless in the area, along with the new beds that U.S. VETS established.

U.S. VETS-Phoenix's HVRP funding falls under the Arizona Veterans in Progress (AZ VIP) program. AZ VIP has a total budget of \$1.45 million, which includes funds from HVRP, VA Grant and Per Diem Program, HUD Supportive Housing Program (SHP), and various private funding sources. The first year of HVRP funding was received in 2002 at the level of \$249,092. During that year, U.S. VETS-Phoenix enrolled 135 homeless veterans, placing 127 in transitional or permanent housing and helping 93 secure steady employment.

Due to this success, they again received an HVRP grant at the same funding level for 2003. In the second year of HVRP, U.S. VETS continued to build and solidify the network of service providers that were referring veterans to them. These providers included VA Healthcare for Homeless Veterans, CASS, Phoenix Rescue Mission, UMOM, Ebony House and Arizona Behavioral Health Corporation. Through that collaborative effort, U.S. VETS-Phoenix was able to enroll 181 veterans, place 140 in transitional or permanent housing, and help 136 find employment, which exceeded their "placed in employment goal" by 80%.

The grant remained at the original funding level until 2004, when U.S. VETS-Phoenix partnered with the largest emergency homeless shelter in Arizona and placed a U.S. VETS-Phoenix career counselor in CASS Employment Services. CASS dedicates 10% of all beds to homeless veterans, and this collaboration led to increased goals of serving around 300 veterans, and placing 225 in employment. U.S. VETS received \$300,000 from the HVRP program due to its increasing numbers of veterans served, and has subsequently received that amount through the current grant cycle.

HVRP services at AZ VIP include case management, career counseling, and job development activities. A wide variety of supportive services are also offered:

- Developing interview skills and practice
- Clothing
- Education and training opportunities

- Transportation assistance
- Life skills training
- Assistance with legal issues
- An on-site career center
- Skill development classes like computer classes, resume development, and individualized barrier reduction counseling

Transitional housing is also available, offering three meals a day and access to Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and Local Veterans Employment Representative (DVOP/LVER) employment specialists. The partnership with CASS allows the co-located career counselor to engage veterans in pre-employment services while they are at the emergency shelter addressing more immediate concerns like substance abuse. Once veterans are ready to seek employment, they are already in contact with the career counselor, and are placed in transitional housing while they begin their job search. This efficient method of delivering services has allowed veterans to be placed in employment in less than 30 days on average.

Currently, U.S. VETS-Phoenix is working to develop housing capacity for homeless veterans so that they can increase the services they provide to about 400 men and women each year.

The AZ VIP program has four main partners that allow it to continue its success in reintegrating homeless veterans into the workplace:

- CASS is an important partner and resource, and this relationship is outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which defines the service agreement and stipulates quarterly meetings to review its goals. Along with the leveraging of employment services mentioned above, CASS also provides office space, staff resources, job leads, development activity, and 40 beds specifically designated for homeless veterans. CASS refers all veterans to the HVRP program.
- The second partner, the Department of Economic Security (DES), ensures the involvement of the DVOP/LVER specialists. There are several DVOP/LVERs who work with the facility, but one DVOP spends two days each week at the site. This collaboration is required by the Department of Labor due to the value of the DVOP/LVER system.
- Another important role player is the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center (VAMC). The VA Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program is the top referral source for AZ VIP. The VAMC has a co-located social worker at Victory Place, which helps to provide homeless veterans quicker access to VA services.
- The final primary partner is the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC). The OIC matches its Workforce Investment Act funds with HVRP funds for training. Training costs grow as more veterans are served, and this leveraging of funds has become important throughout the homeless services community.

Other service partners include Veterans Upward Bound, providing literacy and math skills assessment both on site and off; Mentoring All Americans for Leadership, which offers a four week like skills class; and Arizona Saves, a program that contributes financial responsibility education to both AZ VIP clients and case management staff.

***Points of Interest:***

- The AZ VIP population is 100% veterans
- 53% are between the ages of 31-50
- 41% are between the ages of 51-61
- 3% are between the ages of 18-30
- 94% are male veterans
- 38% are considered “chronically homeless”
- Clients are 69% Caucasian; 25% African American; 12% Hispanic/Latino; and 5% other-unspecified.
- On intake, 40% of veterans have a substance abuse disorder, 40% have alcohol abuse problems, and 15% are diagnosed with a serious mental illness. Another 6% have some other form of disability.
- Approximately 65% of clients complete their self-development programs and enter long-term independent housing.

<b>U.S. VETS-Phoenix HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	260	261	100%
Program Enrollments	220	206	94%
Employment Placements	160	122	76%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$8.00	\$9.04	113%
Placed in permanent housing	165	159	96%
Employment After 90 Days	66	59	89%

- For more information about the U.S. Veterans Initiative-Phoenix HVRP program, go to: <http://www.usvetsinc.org>.
- For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Salvation Army Bell Shelter – Los Angeles Old Air Corps Hangar Offers Veterans Hope**

Approximately 76% of homeless veterans experience drug, alcohol, or mental health problems. While many programs will not accept homeless clients until after they have completed treatment programs for those disabilities, Salvation Army Bell Shelter in Los Angeles purposefully seeks out veterans who are dual-diagnosed with both mental health and substance abuse issues for enrollment in its homeless assistance programs.

Occupying a 40,000-square-foot hangar formerly used as an Army Air Base, the Salvation Army Bell Shelter has received funding under the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) since July 2001, when it received a grant together with the Salvation Army Harbor Light Center.

The HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access employment training and placement assistance. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), and is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans. While some HVRP programs have been in existence for several years, providers must reapply as a first-year program every three years. The HVRP grant program is extremely competitive; fewer than half the organizations that apply for the program receive funding.

In 2003, the Bell Shelter received its own grant of \$160,000 and has seen its HVRP funding increase to \$253,606 for 2006. The reason for that increase is the program's demonstrated success in helping homeless veteran clients prepare for, enter into and retain employment. The most distinguishing aspect of HVRP grants is that they don't simply fund employment services, they *guarantee* successful job placements. That is particularly challenging when serving clients who are homeless and facing multiple barriers to transitioning back to independent living.

With the increased funding, Bell Shelter has expanded its facilities and supportive services portfolio, and has been able to bring in more experienced staff to enhance its HVRP program successes.

In the first year of HVRP funding, Bell Shelter had goals of 180 program enrollments, 121 employment placements, an average wage of \$8.00 per hour at time of hire, 180 vocational assessments, and 180 placements in permanent or transitional housing. All of these goals were exceeded, with the exception of employment placements. The Bell staff was successful helping 106 homeless veterans find steady employment, 88% of its goal. When considering the Bell Shelter's focus on helping clients who are dual-diagnosed with substance abuse and mental disorders, however, that is an astounding success rate.

Also that year, Bell Shelter had 190 enrollments, 194 vocational assessments, and 190 placements in either permanent or transitional housing. The average hourly wage was \$9.64, which was 121% of the goal wage. In the most recent grant cycle, with even higher goals, Bell Shelter still exceeded its ambitious benchmarks in three of five

categories. The program achieved 85% of its employment placement goal, and 94% of its housing placements goal. This was while serving 11% more homeless veteran clients than planned for in the program budget. Bell's employment placements goal was 126, and it was able to place 107. Most notably, its planned wage at hire of \$9.50 per hour was exceeded by 33%. The average hourly earnings of program participants was a commendable \$12.60. Bell Shelter completed 6% more vocational assessments than provided for in its operating budget. A total of 174 formerly homeless veterans were placed in permanent housing in 2006.

Bell Shelter provides housing on-site for up to three years, substance abuse treatment, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) support classes and domestic violence counseling. The Los Angeles Unified School District offers satellite classes on-site in the areas of security guard training, basic education, computer literacy and computer repair. Veterans are assigned to a case manager upon entry into the program, and receive an orientation to the facility and its policies and procedures. Under the guidance of the case manager, clients develop a personal goal plan which is evaluated throughout the veteran's involvement with Bell Shelter programs.

The goal plan addresses each area of life that is important along the path to employment and total health: substance abuse, employment and income, education, medical and mental health, legal, personal and family relationships, leisure and social activities, spiritual growth, and housing. For each subject, the goal plan identifies potential problems or barriers the client may encounter, and prescribes actions he or she must take to address them. A final goal and target date is established for each focus area.

The role of job developer is a key part of any HVRP program, and Bell Shelter is no different. The program's job developer has, over a long period of time, developed strong relationships with a large base of local employers willing to hire veterans, and word has spread throughout the community quickly that Bell Shelter veterans are high quality employees.

Being located in an industrial area, the shelter has built strong relationships with a number of companies representing various trades and the trucking industry. Renzenberger Trucking hires veterans as long- and short-haul drivers, yard or transport drivers, and for various warehouse positions. Parsec and Piazza Trucking hire for similar positions, and if they have openings will hire anyone Salvation Army sends them, except clients with felony convictions.

The Salvation Army, which has a tremendous presence in the Los Angeles region, hires Bell Shelter veterans into positions ranging from security guards to cooks, maintenance workers and case managers. Bell Shelter sends veteran clients to Securitas, a security guard company, with regularity and has forged a strong relationship based on trust and commendable performance by clients. There are some instances of Bell Shelter veterans rising to supervisory levels at different jobs, and then hiring other veterans, creating a strong representation of the Bell Shelter within the community.

To provide training for these occupations, Bell Shelter sends veterans to vocational schools including Camino Real Truck Driving School for trucking positions, and offers security guard training on site to help veterans earn their security guard certification.

The Salvation Army's policy is to address the total person, so it offers spiritual support activities, in which approximately half of the veterans at the shelter participate. Other enrichment activities are encouraged, such as going on weekend pass to visit with family, and the invitation to family members to participate in the client's road to recovery. Family members are routinely invited to holiday events including Thanksgiving and Christmas, all of which are intended to strengthen the client's social skills and repair the strains and emotional wounds he may have caused. This is an integral part of the center's effort to reunite veterans with their families and instill that support

The Bell Shelter realizes that no matter how many homeless veterans come into the facility, there is always a larger number out on the streets. And because of that, effective outreach is a key strategy to exceed the program's HVRP goals. Salvation Army participates in job fairs, monthly meetings of service providers organized by the City of Los Angeles, veteran organization events, community functions, area Stand Downs, and cooperative relationships with other homeless service providers.

One unique relationship that provides outreach opportunities is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, which allows Bell Shelter representatives to enter the county jail when veterans have been identified. The representative will meet with incarcerated veterans to present their program and provide pre-release employment services and housing assistance upon release so that the incarcerated veteran has a plan to ensure successful re-entry into society. This opportunity came about when the sheriff's department heard about Bell Shelter's HVRP program at a meeting for VA's Project CHALENG, and the details were worked out after that initial contact.

Bell Shelter also has an MOU with the Asian American Drug Abuse Program to provide on-the-job training services. A local Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) employment specialist provides weekly on-site job preparation assistance, and the VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem supports 50 beds divided between transitional housing and the drug and alcohol program for homeless veterans. Other critical partners include:

- Other Salvation Army facilities in Los Angeles, Volunteers of America and Union Rescue Mission to provide tools and transportation assistance.
- Department of Mental Health for counseling and therapy.
- State Vocational Rehabilitation to help with employment training.
- Rotary Club, and a mobile medical unit that provides TB tests, diagnosis and medication.

Barbara Ousley, Veterans Department Program Manager for Bell Shelter, had this to say about the Bell Shelter's community involvement: "Bell Shelter is a part of the

community, participating in events such as the Rotary Club, and providing services such as the shelter, and drug and alcohol programs. That helps ensure the success of our program participants.” Ousley also noted that the educational program provided at the Bell campus by the Los Angeles Unified School District is open to the public. “We have weekly chapel services where outside individuals may come in and are even encouraged to come and participate. By providing a place to stay for those in need on short or immediate notice, Bell Shelter has strong relationships with the local police, hospitals, and other community agencies that help people in need.”

In addition to HVRP funds, Bell Shelter receives funding through the VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program, a Department of Housing and Urban Development grant, as well as funds from Los Angeles County Homeless Services and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. The Bell Shelter receives approximately 25% of its funding from private sources.

“The Salvation Army has a longstanding reputation for providing all kinds of assistance to individuals,” said Ousley. “To this end, I believe that often many donate or offer funds because they or someone close to them has been helped by the Salvation Army, and it is known as a trustworthy organization.”

<b>Salvation Army Bell Shelter HVRP – PY 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	300	256	85%
Program Enrollments	225	201	89%
Employment Placements	147	125	85%
Average hourly wage @ placement	8.50	13.50	159%
Placed in permanent housing	195	201	103%
Employment After 90 Days	74	49	66%

- For more information about the Salvation Army Bell Shelter, go to: [http://www1.salvationarmy.org/usw/www\\_usw\\_socal.nsf/](http://www1.salvationarmy.org/usw/www_usw_socal.nsf/) and click on “homeless shelters.”
- For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **New Directions Inc. Combines Drug Treatment With Innovative Job Training Program**

It is estimated that 23% of all homeless individuals are veterans. One of the greatest challenges homeless veterans and their families face is drug addiction. In 1999, the Interagency Council on Homelessness published "Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve." That study found that approximately 49% of veterans had experienced problems with alcohol during the month prior to being surveyed, and that 31% had experienced problems with drugs. Approximately 1 in 10 experienced problems with both alcohol and drug abuse during the month before being surveyed. Mental health problems among homeless veterans co-occurred with substance abuse at a rate of 28% during the month prior to the survey. Drug and alcohol abuse among homeless veterans was found to be more prevalent than among homeless non-veterans.

New Directions Inc. (NDI), a Los Angeles nonprofit drug treatment center founded in 1989, knows well the need to serve homeless veterans with substance abuse challenges, a significant subgroup within the LA homeless population, estimated to number between 18,000 and 27,000.

The mission of NDI is "to provide veterans the tools they need to increase their marketable skills, an environment where they can strengthen their personal and social skills, and the opportunities to test these skills in real world working and living situations while maintaining a focus on the health and well-being of the individual." This is accomplished through a combination of drug and alcohol rehabilitation, supportive transitional housing and job training. Through the third quarter of Program Year 2006, NDI had provided training and employment placement for 44 veterans with an average placement wage of \$10.63. Both benchmarks have exceeded the organization's planned performance goals. The organization had already exceeded 85% of its client assessments goal for the program year.

The work of NDI was enhanced in July 2001 when the organization began a computer training program funded by a grant it received from the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP). The grant was renewed in 2002, and a new HVRP grant was approved for \$230,137 in 2003. Under New Directions' vocational program, homeless veterans who are frequently unable to access traditional employment services receive vital assistance to re-enter the workforce.

The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project (HVRP) is funded under the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), in compliance with the requirements of 38 United States Code, Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. HVRP is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans, and applicants are rated on successful employment placement and job retention results.

In order for homeless individuals to become self-sufficient and independent, they need to have stability in their lives, including housing, freedom from addiction, and a consistent source of income. NDI utilizes HVRP funding to prepare homeless veterans to return to the workforce. HVRP funding makes it possible for NDI staff to provide computer training and occupational skills training in culinary arts and human services.

Clients may receive job training for paid, part-time human service positions at NDI facilities, including detoxification coordinators, resident managers and service coordinators. The opportunity for veterans to offer support to other veterans helps clients believe they can succeed, and can lead to permanent employment with New Directions or other social service agencies. Currently there are over 78 staff members, half of whom are NDI graduates.

In addition to human service industry training, New Directions maintains other job training programs called “social enterprises,” where homeless individuals learn new skills in practical working environments. NDI provides a culinary arts program, where homeless veterans receive more than 700 hours of training and perform catering services for events throughout Los Angeles. NDI also provides a handiworker/construction services program, teaching carpentry, painting, repair and site clean-up skills. The training course includes 240 hours of classroom study followed by on-site experience.

The newest social enterprise NDI operates with the assistance of the HVRP grant is a restaurant known as the Veterans’ Village Diner. In the summer of 2003, New Directions opened the Veterans Village Diner located on the North Side of the VA Campus. The Veterans Village Diner serves home style cooking at reasonable prices in a World War II 1940’s diner atmosphere. The Diner is another New Directions social enterprise, which means that all profits from the operations go directly towards saving more veterans’ lives. Located on the grounds of the VA West Los Angeles Healthcare Center in Brentwood, this diner is the result of a collaborative effort between NDI, DOL and the community. The revitalization of a preexisting canteen began after NDI partnered with a master’s level business administration class at the UCLA Anderson School of Business to create an action plan and budget. The agency was then able to secure funding from the Liberty Hill Foundation to refurbish the site and turn it into a thriving business serving the public, including VA employees at nearby facilities. The goal of all of the NDI work programs is to become successful enough to be self-sustaining, and to provide additional funding to expand agency services.

NDI believes that preparing homeless veterans with training and experience to enter the workforce, mitigating other problems including drug addiction challenges, and normalizing client social connections with family members helps them to return to a sense of stability in their lives. The veteran can then focus on future life goals with a positive outlook on life.

The Department of Labor requires all grant recipients to institute job training programs that connect with the community in unique and innovative ways and can be replicated in other places. Pat Sheppard-Flores, NDI’s Grant Proposal Writer, believes the work

training program NDI has established can be successful elsewhere as long as there is strong cooperation between a lead agency, other community organizations, and small businesses so that appropriate guidance and supervision of participants is available throughout the training process.

<b>New Directions HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	66	59	89%
Assessments	125	106	85%
Employment Placement	55	44	80%
Permanent housing placement	45	36	80%
Average wage at job placement	\$10.00	\$10.63	106%

New Directions addresses homeless veteran needs in a comprehensive, community-driven, hands-on manner. It offers clients the opportunity to control their addiction problems, to learn highly marketable skills and to rebuild their ties with their families. HVRP funding enhances NDI by making occupational skills training in human service and culinary training programs possible. “We find HVRP funding to be critical to the core of our job training program,” said New Directions Executive Director Toni Reinis. NDI effectively leverages local initiatives and resources to expand services to the homeless veteran population, exemplifying how a modest amount of grant funding can be multiplied when local organizations work together. For all of these reasons, the NDI work training program is an HVRP best practice.

- For more information about the New Directions HVRP program, go to: <http://www.newdirectionsinc.org>.
- For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **PATH Program Creates Innovative Social Services Mall to Help the Homeless**

The shopping mall has become an American icon within our society. We flock to it to purchase consumer goods, to see movies, to take walks around miles of corridors, or to simply hang out. It's a place for families, seniors, teens – a place for everyone. It's a one-stop haven for just about all of our needs and wants.

PATH (People Assisting The Homeless) has created a new kind of American mall in Los Angeles, California. Instead of a shopping mall, however, PATH has created a service mall for people who are homeless or living in poverty. The *PATHMall* houses dozens of private and public social service agencies in suites along a modern mall corridor. There's a full-service employment agency, a substance abuse counseling and treatment center, a mental health care office, a free medical clinic, a public benefits center, community court, and even a beauty salon. If a person is living in poverty or living on the streets, this mall provides every service that she or he would need to overcome the barriers to accessing permanent housing and steady employment.

PATH opened the *PATHMall* in 2002. It is a collaborative of 20 community-based organizations and government social service agencies that form a "one-stop shopping center" for homeless individuals and families. It is part of a 40,000-square-foot facility known as the PATH Regional Homeless Center. In the span of one year, the mall transforms the lives of thousands of people, providing mental health services to about 1,200 people; employment placement assistance to more than 500; health care to about 850, and free haircuts and manicures to more than 6,000.

The program was created in 1993, and Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) funding through the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) was approved in April 2000. During the first year of HVRP funding, the program received \$103,441, and in subsequent years it received \$102,000 annually. The program received a \$105,100 HVRP grant for Program Year 2007. The *PATHFinders* Job Center/*PATHAcademy* program utilizes HVRP funding, and is also supported by the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program, Employees Community Foundation of Boeing Southern California; and the Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation.

Through its unique layout and design, PATH is able to offer the following services to participants:

- **Employment counseling:** Employment associates meet regularly with clients to perform individualized skills assessments, provide career counseling and provide linkages to prospective employers.
- **Job preparation workshops:** Workshops on resume-writing, interviewing techniques and dressing for success are provided.
- **Classroom training:** Los Angeles Unified School District instructors teach computer classes that help participants learn the necessary skills to operate

Microsoft Office Suite 2000 programs, including Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Powerpoint.

- **On-the-Job Training:** Vocation training and certification are offered through CSC Certification, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, and community partners in forklift operation, warehousing, security and maintenance.
- **Employment Resources:** The job center provides access to on-site office resources (computers, phones, fax, voice mail) for job hunting.
- **Referrals to Supportive Services:** Clients gain access to the full range of service providers located on-site in the *PATHMall*, including transitional housing, healthcare, legal assistance, benefits and personal care services.

Since the inception of the program, PATH has made several adjustments to respond to the unique service needs of its homeless veteran clients. Staff have increased their emphasis on providing training and job placement activities in specific vocations, such as security guards, forklift operation and building maintenance. They have also increased their efforts to ensure that clients are aware of and have access to on-the-job training (office managing, building maintenance) and basic computer training. These newer classes are very popular with the veterans, and have a much higher rate of enrollment than the longer, 15-week computer training course, which is often a problem for veterans who are looking for immediate employment.

These services are provided through strategic partnerships with several local organizations that offer comprehensive employment and supportive services for homeless veterans, including:

- **DVOP/LVERs** – PATH works closely with Department of Labor Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) to provide weekly specialized services to eligible veterans.
- **WIA/One-Stop** – PATH maintains a service contract with the United Auto Worker Labor Employment and Training Corporation (UAW-LETC) WorkSource Center in South Los Angeles, which is funded by the Workforce Investment Act. The contract expands employment assistance services to complement PATH's development and training programs, and often creates cross-referrals to other employment opportunities.
- **Department of Veterans Affairs** – As a Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program grantee, PATH partners with the VA to provide transitional housing and linkages to supportive services for homeless veterans who come through the program and the *PATHMall*.
- **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** – The organization has maintained service contracts with HUD for more than eight years, and current grants support *PATHFinders*, the regional street outreach team; the Access Center at the Regional Homeless Center; and *PATHWays* Housing.
- **Coordination of other Resources for Homeless Veterans** – PATH offers a wealth of services beyond employment for homeless veterans. At the *PATHMall*, veterans can access more than 20 private and public service agencies, including

Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, CLARE Foundation, Gateways Hospital, Traveler's Aid Society and legal aid. Staff also coordinate activities with larger, national veterans service providers such as U.S. Veterans Initiative, which provides *PATHFinders* a full-time intern and service referrals for clients.

To manage these collaborations, PATH utilizes formal memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and constant communication between PATH and the personnel of participating agencies.

The unique aspect of this program is the central location of the service providers. Clients are able to walk into the mall, complete a single intake process and begin addressing all of the complex issues relating to their homelessness in one place. With this coordinated approach, each program enhances the likelihood of success of the others, thus reducing the chance that clients will become frustrated or feel overwhelmed.

In addition to promoting longer client retention and more comprehensive care, the mall service model reduces wasteful duplication of existing services and promotes greater cost-effectiveness through shared resources, overhead and a coordinated intake process. This collaboration allows each agency to build its capacity by providing more comprehensive care with improved outcomes at a lower cost-per-service. In addition to being a convenient location for the clients, a sense of community is created around a centralized mission.

During the 2002-03 fiscal year, the program had difficulty achieving its goals. The average wage at job placement was \$8.49, with 44 employment placements. The actual goal for the year was 65, but the slow pace of the economy and the stagnant state of the job market adversely impacted the program's success. As a result, the organization created a community advisory board comprised of business owners, entrepreneurs, corporate leaders and economic development agency representatives. The board uses its professional expertise and networks to connect PATH clients to employment opportunities. This initiative has allowed PATH to greatly improve its placement goals in subsequent program years.

Another area that presented challenges was meeting permanent housing placement goals. Staff discovered that most of the veterans who were referred to the PATH program already had access to acceptable shelter, and if they were not already housed they were able to acquire housing at nearby shelters without too much difficulty. In order to help clients who are not housed, PATH strengthened partnerships with local agencies that place homeless veterans. They have also been successful in reserving a number of beds for veterans through PATH's housing programs.

The *PATHMall* has had considerable success moving people from homelessness to self-sufficiency, and has been able to share its innovative model with other communities in need. The program has been featured in national and international media. ABC World News Tonight highlighted the *PATHMall* and stated it is the only facility of its kind in

the nation. Community leaders throughout California, and representatives from Japan, Ireland and England have visited the PATHMall to learn more about replicating the program in their own cities.

Staff are currently engaged in developing resource and technical assistance information to help organizations replicate the social and supportive services mall model, and are publishing the PATHMall Handbook, a how-to guide for building effective community and government partnerships.

<b>PATH, Los Angeles, HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	80	73	91%
Assessments	85	92	108%
Employment Placement	65	37	57%
Permanent housing placement	70	57	81%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.00	\$11.36	142%

*Most recent data taken from VOPAR December 31, 2006*

- For more information about the PATH program, go to: <http://www.epath.org>.
- For information on HVRP, go to: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Swords to Plowshares Coordination of Specialized Units Allows HVRP Program to Excel**

Swords to Plowshares is a community-based veterans self-help group founded in 1974 to advocate for veterans' rights and to provide direct services to veterans. Through the vets-helping-vets model, Swords works to help rebuild the shattered lives of soldiers who were once put in harm's way to serve and protect this nation. Swords' goal is to help homeless and low-income veterans through direct services and advocacy for effective public policy.

There are more than 2,400 homeless veterans in San Francisco, and Swords to Plowshares has been the city's most prominent agency in addressing their needs. For those facing homelessness due to substance abuse, legal issues and unemployment, Swords is there providing supportive services every step of the way.

Swords is recognized and respected nationwide for its pioneering and effective work on behalf of veterans struggling with homelessness and poverty. And for more than 30 years, Swords to Plowshares has been the principal provider of employment services for homeless and low-income veterans in the San Francisco area. Swords helps homeless veterans make the transition to gainful employment by offering vocational counseling, life-skills training, resume writing assistance and job referrals. In some cases, employers who accept referrals from Swords can be reimbursed for training costs, and the organization helps those companies apply for and obtain tax credits for hiring its program participants.

Swords first received funding from the Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project in 1990 through the local Private Industry Council of San Francisco. Since then, the program has successfully competed for funding consistently, with grants ranging from \$110,000 to \$312,000. For Program Year 2007, the Swords HVRP program received \$300,000.

The program is focused on helping homeless veterans with barriers to full employment. More than 50% of its clients are impacted by substance abuse and mental health problems. More than 55% are between the ages of 45 and 61. Approximately 45% of clients are Vietnam Era Veterans. About 59% identify themselves as being part of a minority community, the largest of which is African-Americans. More than 90% of the clients are male.

Swords has a holistic approach to service delivery. In order to properly address each veteran's needs, organized "units" administer services ranging from transitional housing to comprehensive supportive services. The Residential and Community Resources unit provides transitional housing, housing assistance, assistance filing for VA benefits, and legal counseling. The Supportive Services unit provides mental health counseling and temporary housing assistance, both internally and through community service providers. The employment services team works closely with other programs offered by Swords and community-based organizations in the area to help stabilize the veteran so he or she is

able to fully participate in employment and training activities. The majority of employment-related services are administered internally.

Swords' HVRP employment and supportive services include:

- Job readiness assessment
- Vocational counseling
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling
- Pre-employment counseling
- Resume development/Interview techniques
- Financial support services (transportation funds, clothing vouchers, food vouchers, tools, union dues, uniforms, etc.)
- Housing assistance
- Job search/job placement assistance
- Retention counseling
- Support groups

When the program began in 1990, Swords was a sub-contractor with the Private Industry Council, and charged with running a HVRP demonstration project. In 1993, the Swords' HVRP program received the Department of Labor grant directly and was able to nearly triple the amount of services offered to veterans.

Through the years, the organization has been able to develop collaborations with other community-based homeless service providers. These collaborations have enhanced and expanded the support available for homeless veterans. Because of its links to more than 40 service providers in the San Francisco area, Swords is a "One Stop Center" providing a continuum of care with seamless service delivery, and is a certified "Access Point" in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act. The agency is electronically linked to partners offering resources that include substance abuse treatment, mental health care, permanent supportive housing, life skills training, job searches and career counseling. The San Francisco Career Link offers veterans additional testing and vocational assessment for in-depth exploration of their employment goals.

A Department of Labor Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) representative is stationed at Swords' main office through an agreement with the local Employment Development Department (EDD) office. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Comprehensive Homeless Center provides case management counseling and recovery services for eligible clients. VA's Veterans Industries operates the Compensated Work Therapy program for veterans with mental illness or other serious barriers to employment, and its Vet Center conducts group counseling sessions. These programs all have reciprocal referral relationships with Swords to Plowshares.

Swords is also a charter member of the Treasure Island Homeless Development Initiative (TIHDI). In May 2000, Swords established a transitional housing program for homeless veterans at that location. The Presidio Veterans Academy provides the veteran residential community with educational and training opportunities.

Through the Private Industry Council (PIC), Swords operates on-the-job training programs for eligible veterans under the Homeless Employment Collaborative (HEC) and Title 1B of the Adult Workforce Investment Act. Swords is a member of HEC and a member of the PIC Committee of Community Agencies (CCA). The CCA actively advises the PIC how best to provide employment services to economically disadvantaged job seekers.

Swords is a member organization of the California Association of Veteran Service Agencies (CAVSA), a statewide association of community-based organizations providing employment and training services to veterans with significant barriers to employment, and the San Francisco Employment Committee, an EDD-sponsored group of local veteran advocacy organizations. It meets monthly to coordinate services, promote the hiring of veterans and plan the annual San Francisco Veterans Job Fair.

Swords has also partnered with Goodwill Industries and Northern California Service League in the San Francisco Training Partnership (SFTP). Homeless and disadvantaged veterans receive short-term skills training for in-demand occupations, and are then placed into training related jobs. Effective communication between Swords and area employers ensures employment opportunities are available for program participants.

<b>Swords to Plowshares HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	71	82	115%
Assessments	85	122	144%
Employment Placement	46	57	124%
Permanent housing placement	24	19	79%
Average wage at job placement	\$9.75	\$12.41	127%

General assistance benefits for eligible program participants are provided through the County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP) of the San Francisco Department of Social Services. The county’s Personal Assisted Employment Services (PAES) program also refers veterans to the Swords program.

Through its interaction with numerous government and community service organizations, a stronger voice and enhanced service network have emerged. Services and dollars are stretched more effectively through collaborative efforts. Also, the ability to provide comprehensive services in-house permits a more stable support system for the veteran, reducing the need to go to several sites to secure needed assistance.

- For more information about the Sword to Plowshares HVRP program, go to: <http://www.swords-to-plowshares.org>
- For information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Veterans Village of San Diego HVRP Program Remains One of Nation's Best**

Veterans Village of San Diego (VVSD) is dedicated to extending assistance to needy and homeless veterans of all wars and eras, and their families, by providing housing, food, clothing, substance abuse recovery and mental health counseling, job training and job placement assistance.

This is the mission statement of VVSD, a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant recipient since 1988. It is the driving ideal behind the organization's service to homeless veterans in the San Diego area. Since being awarded its first HVRP grant of \$100,000, VVSD has earned widespread recognition for its employment assistance program as a replicable "best practice," and steady increases in its funding to its current annual level of \$230,000

Authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access employment training and placement assistance. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), and is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans. While some HVRP programs have been in existence for several years, providers must reapply as a first-year program every three years. The HVRP grant program is extremely competitive; fewer than half the organizations that apply for the program receive funding.

Upon entrance to VVSD's program, veterans receive a comprehensive assessment during which their employability issues are examined. This includes math and reading skills due to labor union standards for members, educational level, prior work history, health status and legal issues that may be barriers to employment and housing placement.. Each veteran's issues are addressed to ensure that their employability is not in question, an individual plan is created, and the client is ready to begin his or her quest.

Job readiness training includes preparation for interviews, help with preparing a resume, instruction on how to properly fill out applications, and general preparation on how to apply for employment. Veterans have access to computer skills training and classes in software operation and computer literacy.

VVSD utilizes the National Veterans Training Institute's "The Ultimate Job Search for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" series. They also focus on upgrading veterans' skills, and giving them a thorough knowledge of the process of returning to the workplace, addressing personal barriers, and improving their employability. Throughout the program, ongoing counseling is provided for those veterans with tougher or multiple barriers to employment. The goal is to provide career-oriented training and help veterans obtain long-term employment at liveable wages.

Program representatives follow up with veterans once they have found a job at regular intervals to make sure they maintain employment, have access to support if they need it

to reduce the likelihood that problems will adversely impact their employment, and help them prepare to advance or find more satisfying or better paying opportunities. An important avenue for this follow-up has been the creation of the VVSD Alumni Association. This organization allows successful program participants to further develop their social integration while serving as role models for new clients. Many alumni come back to volunteer and help those who are just beginning their recovery programs.

“The development of an Alumni Association has provided numerous opportunities for our graduates through the fostering of mentors,” says Sandy Borum, Pre-Apprentice Program Administrator at VVSD. “Alumni meet with residents to encourage their participation upon graduation. They strive to set the necessary examples of acceptable, responsible and productive life skills required to once again feel a part of a society from which so many veterans once felt alienated.”

To demonstrate the commitment and involvement that the Association inspires in program graduates, VVSD was proud to point out there is an alumnus from 1976 who is still active in the Alumni Association today.

With the employment and training department located on the same site as the long-term substance abuse treatment facility, VVSD provides easy access for veterans to take care of their personal issues while pursuing their career development goals. Program participants have been successfully placed as security officers, truck driving and equipment operators, hospitality industry professionals and in the building trades. A pre-apprenticeship coordinator works with placement and apprenticeship programs for the building trades, ensuring proper training for clients and employment opportunities with high earnings potential.

“VVSD has been fortunate to have developed a strong rapport with several industries and employers to ensure successful career opportunities for our clients; taking into consideration their unique and sometimes limiting barriers to employment,” said Borum.

NASSCO Shipbuilding Company offers several different apprenticeship programs and is easily accessible via public transportation. The company even offers transportation to and from the site after regular operating hours. VVSD has also had success within the transportation industry. Companies like Werner Trucking, Swift Trucking, Covenant Transportation, and CRST Van Expedited offer training and employment for program graduates. Building trade unions have been valuable employment resources, giving veterans priority after initial contacts were developed and clients proved their reliability and quality performance.

Homeless Court, a program started in 1989 at VVSD’s Stand Down, brings the court to local shelters so that homeless veterans can address the legal issues that prevent them from obtaining employment and housing placements. Between 1989 and 1992, the Homeless Court Program resolved 4,895 cases for 942 homeless veterans at Stand Down. This success led to the expansion from annual, to quarterly, and now monthly sessions.

The Court doesn't dismiss charges against homeless veterans, but through plea-bargaining conducted by the county prosecutor and the public defender's office, the Superior Court judge accepts the time a client spends in a recovery and employment training program – like the one offered at VVSD – as a sentencing alternative to jail time and heavy fines. In some cases, a client's volunteer work in support of VVSD activities can be counted as community service.

VVSD offers a child support program to assist in reconciling payment issues, and also a family reunification program that allows clients to re-establish family ties, an important source of support for many as self development programs continue from recovery to full self sufficiency.

Outreach efforts in partnership with other community service providers bring homeless veterans into the embrace of VVSD programs. These efforts include:

- The San Diego Stand Down – a program that was created to bring a wide range of services and referrals to help homeless veterans to one location, Stand Down is now a national program and is considered the most effective outreach program to help the homeless in the nation.
- A winter shelter with support from the VA and the City of San Diego.
- Referrals from program graduates who work with other assistance agencies.
- Employers who recognize the value of VVSD supportive programs for veterans in crisis.
- Regional job fairs.
- An incarcerated veterans training program that distributes VVSD videos in the prison system.
- Strong relationships with veteran service organizations (VSOs) in the San Diego area.

VVSD's Metro facility is in the process of expanding from 87 beds to 200 beds. "The expansion of VVSD is well under way. We have actually started filling the beds and preparing to expand the services provided through the Employment and Training Department at the Metro site," said Borum. The project includes several new computers for residents to utilize during basic and intermediate computer training classes in collaboration with the San Diego Community College District Adult Education Services.

The expansion will also improve the Job Club Workshop by engaging local employers to share insights on the expectations and practices prevalent in the region's work force. "Additionally, there will be increased input from the Employment Development Department, utilizing the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment (LVER) staff. Arrangements have been made to have Human Resources representatives visit the Workshop and participate in mock interviews and hiring dos and don'ts. This expansion will enable us to hire a dedicated Job Developer, ensuring access to a wider variety of employers and industries," Borum said.

In its longstanding campaign to increase services to homeless veterans, VVSD is constantly seeking ways to build capacity. The organization has built strong partnerships with the following:

- Volunteers of America, which provides sober living transitional housing and veteran referrals.
- St. Vincent de Paul, an organization that provides beds, food, and case management services.
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs offers medical services, short-term substance abuse treatment, and funding through the Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem program.
- VVSD Metro site has a VA nurse in house, and depends on the Family Health Center to provide medical services for veterans who are not eligible to receive care from the VA.
- U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service DVOP/LVERs provide job referrals.
- The local Service Delivery Area and the San Diego Imperial Counties Labor Council provide job readiness training and job placement assistance.
- State and Local correctional facilities and local recovery/transitional housing organizations provide services for incarcerated veterans and those who have been recently released from corrections facilities.

VVSD’s partnerships are managed through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU’s), organizational meetings, and years of collaboration which has resulted in many of these services being offered at the Metro campus.

<b>VVSD HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	110	125	114%
Program Enrollments	96	112	117%
Employment Placements	67	74	110%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$11.00	\$11.89	108%
Placed in permanent housing	58	112	193%
Employment After 90 Days	37	35	95%

- For more information about the Sword to Plowshares HVRP program, go to: <http://www.vvsd.net>.
- For information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Vietnam Veterans of California HVRP Funding Enhances Multi-Campus Program**

One of the greatest challenges veterans face, especially those who are homeless, is obtaining work skills and securing employment. Without a steady income, homeless veterans enrolled in programs designed to help them re-enter society as productive, self-sufficient citizens will not succeed. Even veterans with mental and physical disabilities, those who need permanent supportive housing and other assistance, most often yearn for the added security and self-esteem gained through employment.

With Service Centers in Santa Rosa, Sacramento, Menlo Park and Eureka, Vietnam Veterans of California (VVC) has maximized the benefits of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grants it receives to provide a full range of employment services – from resume and interview preparation to job placement and follow-up case management. VVC received \$500,000 in HVRP funding for Program Year 2007. The organization also benefits from a state government that generously funds successful employment services programs.

The success of the VVC employment services program depends on a highly motivated professional staff and strong collaboration among hundreds of community-based and government agency service providers across a large territory. From outreach efforts to follow-up counseling, VVC staff provide positive reinforcement and encouragement to clients who gradually learn to believe in themselves again.

As with all HVRP grantees, VVC provides the full continuum of care to help homeless veterans re-enter society as productive citizens. Outreach involves homeless care providers, VA medical clinics and hospitals, the faith community, veteran service organizations and charitable organizations throughout Northern California. Emergency shelter prior to individual needs assessments and referrals to mental health and substance abuse treatment programs are readily available. Food, clothing, transportation assistance, personal hygiene and health care are provided at VVC facilities or community partner organizations. When veterans fail to meet VA eligibility requirements for services, faith- and community-based organizations and state agencies step in to help.

Along with HVRP funds, VVC receives HUD funding to provide transitional housing, and transitional housing is also available to program participants at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers in Sacramento and Eureka and through the VA Grant and Per Diem program.

While adequate, diversified funding and collaboration are important to the success of all homeless and employment programs, VVC Executive Director Peter Cameron cites three other vital elements that are critical to the success of his agency: First, it is important that skilled program staff believe in what they are doing, have confidence in the support they get from the agency and demonstrate, in a non-judgmental way, their respect for the veterans they serve. Secondly, it is important that the program have an element of

homeless prevention as well as intervention by identifying and mitigating the often complex and interrelated issues veterans face. Third, the program needs to address and educate the larger community with the goal of effecting public policy and garnering the required resources.

The “Winning the Employment Game” program is an example of such an innovative program. Created by VVC’s Tim Hodenfield, the “game” focuses on helping individuals, many with serious barriers to employment, achieve results by providing a personalized career exploration and job-search program. Approximately 90% of “Winning the Employment Game” graduates attain jobs they want or go on to pursue higher education because of the self-esteem and confidence they gain during the two-week program. Comprehensive placement services are offered, including job preparation, assistance with resumes, information resources and interview preparation. The average wage at job placement commanded by program participants was \$13.07 per hour.

This employment preparation and placement program has been so successful, in fact, VVC has shared it with California state government agencies and other service providers working with people facing a multitude of health and personal challenges.

<b>Vietnam Veterans of California HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	70	68	97%
Assessments	80	91	114%
Employment Placement	40	36	90%
Permanent housing placement	55	32	58%
Average wage at job placement	\$10.00	\$11.85	119%

In terms of building and maintaining collaborative arrangements with service providers stretching across a vast region, few have achieved the success of VVC. The organization created and serves on a statewide collaborative group, the California Association of Veterans Service Agencies (CAVSA). The group meets regularly to share ideas and works to maximize services for veterans. Partners who share in the successful outcomes reported by Vietnam Veterans of California include:

- U.S. Department of Labor
- Department of Veterans Affairs – VA hospitals and clinics
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Social Security Administration
- California Economic Development Division
- California Department of Rehabilitation
- Community Action Committees (all four VVC locations)
- Continuum of Care Committees (all four VVC locations)
- Colleges – Humboldt State, Foothill Community College, Sacramento Community College and Sacramento State

- Salvation Army
- Volunteers of America
- Faith Community (all four VVC locations)
- Workforce Investment Boards
- CAL Works (programs for low-income women)
- California Department of Motor Vehicles
- County Departments of Social Services
- Municipal Drug Courts
- Sacramento Housing Alliance
- Mercy Housing Coalition
- Community Food Banks

VVC has dedicated staff members who search for and develop employment opportunities for its veteran clients, and case managers contribute to that effort as time permits. They also help ensure clients have the transportation assistance they need for appointments and interviews, occasionally providing it themselves. The commitment of staff members to the veterans enrolled in VVC programs reflect the philosophy of the organization's leadership. Success is rooted in knowing the local community, demonstrating respect for veterans who need assistance, and educating the larger community on how it can help end homelessness among America's veterans.

- For more information on about Vietnam Veterans of California, go to:  
<http://www.vietvets.org>.
- For more information about Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service programs, go to: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Volunteers of America – Los Angeles Saving Veterans’ Lives on Skid Row**

In the middle of Los Angeles’ Skid Row, an area of the city occupied by people living in run-down hotels, alleys and in the streets after the eruption of Los Angeles’ infamous drug problem in the 1970s, the Volunteers of America (VOA) Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) works among one of the most disabled, poverty-strapped and chronically homeless populations in the nation to offer veterans a chance to reclaim their sense of self worth and return to society as productive citizens.

The large population of homeless men and women of Skid Row are regularly found on the streets, and in the same general locations, year-round. Yielding to struggling business owners’ constant pressure, the L.A. police department frequently answers calls to move them out of their “territory,” but the homeless always return when other law enforcement priorities diminish the number of patrols available for that purpose. With more than 90% of these men and women presenting histories of long-term substance abuse, inescapable poverty, medical and mental health problems and legal issues, they truly are the “dispossessed.” VOA-Los Angeles not only attempts to help these men and women find housing and supportive services, they make it a priority to help them overcome extreme and multiple barriers to employment – the only way they can escape the grip of hopelessness.

Recognizing that a large percentage of the homeless on Skid Row were veterans, VOA-Los Angeles applied for and received an HVRP grant of \$200,000 in 2000. To the surprise of many city officials, the success of the organization’s employment assistance initiative for veterans earned a 33% increase in funding for the program in its second application cycle.

VOA-Los Angeles has relied heavily upon networking and leveraging of funds from a variety of sources to enhance the services it provides to homeless clients. Many staff members have worked in the Los Angeles area for 20 years or more, and therefore have relationships with many individuals and organizations that can benefit VOA clients. According to Program Manager Duffy Leahy, one key to developing such relationships is always being willing to offer your help to someone else who might ask a favor. By being good neighbors in the Los Angeles area, VOA staff continues to forge and strengthen these critical relationships.

“We place our veterans with a wide variety of employers,” said Leahy. “Our employment placements are as varied as the job skills of the veterans we serve. We have very good success placing vets as drivers, warehouse workers, forklift operators, and security guards.” Leahy said the security field is not as inviting for clients working to transition out of homelessness as it was before September 11, 2001, because criminal backgrounds – even those with lesser offenses – prevent veterans from receiving guard certification from the state.

VOA has worked with some veterans who have had highly desirable skills including a design draftsman who made \$32.50 an hour, and a journeyman pipe fitter who earned a wage of \$45 an hour.

Camino Real Trucking partners with VOA to provide commercial driver's license (CDL) training and assistance with job placement. "We have been fortunate to place clients with Swift Trucking, CR England Trucking, CRST and others," said Leahy. "We assist veterans with supportive services to help them recover lost CDLs and to get endorsements for hazardous materials and other certifications necessary to drive trucks." This is a boon to the organization's clients because the earnings potential is high, and the work is ideal for those who would not thrive in a more structured, close office-type environment.

With the high cost of living in the Los Angeles area, veterans have to feel they have a way to support themselves to remain successful and want to stay employed. However, if a veteran is placed in a job with a low starting wage, VOA encourages them to continue coming back and work toward qualifying for and applying for better paying positions. "We find that even hard-to-place vets with multiple barriers to employment are easier to place when they are already working," said Leahy.

The staff at VOA-Los Angeles operates under the mindset that they must work hard and do more than is required because their service to veterans in recovery must always be excellent. The administration pays close attention to managing its finances well, stretching every dollar and cutting out unnecessary expenses. This efficiency has served the program well, as evidenced in its reports to DOL-VETS and the success of its assistance program participants.

Services offered at VOA-Los Angeles include:

- Substance abuse recovery programs
- Emergency shelter and intake assessments
- Transitional housing with services through the VA Grant and Per Diem and self pay programs
- Access to permanent low cost housing
- Employment services from pre-employment to job retention
- Supportive services including clothing, tools, transportation, and computer training Referrals to VA for benefits counseling and application assistance
- Family counseling and reunification programs
- Monitoring of prescribed medications
- Meals
- Extensive, supportive case management

The emergency shelter is located at the VOA site, with the VA Grant and Per Diem transitional housing two blocks away at Ballington Plaza. Permanent housing is also available at the Plaza facility. "In Los Angeles, housing is always in short supply and the price is always rising," Leahy said. "We work continually to identify the location and

availability of affordable housing. Clients are encouraged to find roommates to help ease the cost of housing, and VOA refers some to subsidized permanent housing when the need arises.”

VOA-Los Angeles utilizes a combination of Health Realization and Motivational Interviewing in their counseling and case management, and the staff has been trained in both of these methods.

Health Realization is based on the thought that each person has their own innate wisdom, and that at any time they can call upon this wisdom to make decisions in their own best interest. Proposed by Dr. Roger Mills, Health Realization supports people making changes in their lives after seeking guidance and information, then realizing what is best for them. With the proper guidance, this is not only possible but likely, and the client takes ownership of the decisions affecting his or her recovery.

Dr. William R. Miller and Dr. Stephen Rollnick wrote a book introducing Motivational Interviewing, which is a counseling method that stresses a non-confrontational approach. It involves using open-ended questions to discover information, affirmations, reflections and summarization to ensure clients that they are being listened to and heard. Its aim is to bring about positive change in the smoothest manner possible.

VOA-Los Angeles has a broad base of partners to assist them in providing a comprehensive range of services for its most challenging special needs clients:

- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides funding for transitional housing, medical services and veterans benefits counseling.
- U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service grant provides outreach, employment preparation and job placement services.
- Worksources works with VOA to provide recruiting and training.
- Los Angeles Unified School District, Hacienda La Puente Unified School District, Camino Real Trucking School and others for vocational training.
- A site-based computer lab is staffed by LA Unified staff five days a week.
- California Department of Rehabilitation and VA provide rehabilitation services.
- Outreach and extended housing are provided by Union Rescue Mission, Midnight Mission, and Los Angeles Mission.
- United American Indian Involvement and Social Security are partners in providing benefits and income supports.

VOA-Los Angeles also partners with Salvation Army Harbor Light and Bell Shelters to offer more services to as many veterans as possible.

VOA-Los Angeles has been developing these relationships with other organizations for years. “It is these relationships that make our success possible. There’s no single organization that can do it all. It takes a lot of work and constant networking, but you can see the benefit of that effort when you see the program succeed.”

<b>VOA-Los Angeles HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	300	433	144%
Program Enrollments	200	175	88%
Employment Placements	120	104	87%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$8.75	\$10.07	115%
Placed in permanent housing	160	141	88%
Employment After 90 Days	70	73	104%

- For more information about the Volunteers of America – Los Angeles program, go to: <http://www.voala.org>.
- For information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Denver Department of Human Services HVRP Helps “Veterans Marching Forward”**

The Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS) operates Veterans Marching Forward, a program funded through the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP). They first received this grant in 2003, with a funding level of \$268,532. The current level is \$299,736, and there are no other funding sources for the program.

DDHS serves all people in need in the community, but the focus for Veterans Marching Forward is employable homeless veterans. Ian Lisman, Program Coordinator for Veterans Marching Forward, explained that the typical HVRP client is a single male between 35 and 65 years old with severe employment barriers.

Authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access employment training and placement assistance. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), and is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans. The HVRP grant program is extremely competitive; fewer than half the organizations that apply for the program receive funding.

Individuals who enroll in Veterans Marching Forward all meet with a case manager to determine which services are needed and to make a plan of action. Services offered include making an employment development plan, job readiness skills training, resume services, supportive services including product vouchers, haircut vouchers, housing referrals, transportation assistance, phone cards, voicemail, clothing, tools, and uniforms.

“These supportive services are provided directly to the client, and for the most part are paid for by our program,” said Lisman. “All new clients attend our Job Readiness Class, which covers job seeking skills, such as resume development, interviewing skills, personal grooming and hygiene, time management skills, money management and general life skills. These services were developed in a direct response to client needs that were unmet by other organizations, through client feedback and observation.”

The services that DDHS offers through Veterans Marching Home have evolved over the past three years. Client tracking and retention measures, accounting practices, data management systems, forms and procedures have all seen improvements to provide more client and program accountability. Clients benefit as the program improves through a broader range of services available, and there has also been increased accuracy and detail in reports to upper management and federal reporting.

Veterans Marching Home collaborates with the city and county Veterans Service Office/Trust Fund. This partnership was a natural fit because of the related scope of services involved. Veterans Service Office/Trust Fund provides transitional housing and license fees. As a part of DDHS’s grant guidelines, Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) provide pre-

employment services through the Workforce Center. Bayaud Industries offers job club training and other employment services, while Denver Works provides professional work clothing, and Homeless Initiative provides data tracking and client services. “Partnerships have evolved over time and were an outgrowth of national and local homeless initiatives which proved to be a great fit with our organization,” Lisman said.

Veterans Marching Home has instituted a phased implementation of supportive services, planned incentives and ongoing case management in order to make the most of their limited funding. This means that as the client goes from preparing for a job to actually obtaining a job, the services he or she receives increase to provide strong support for them as they enter employment. “We move from bus tokens, to bus passes for instance, once the client is working to reduce client trips to our office. We also deliver supportive services to the client’s work site if the client is unable to come in during office hours due to their work schedule,” said Lisman.

Over 70% of Veterans Marching Home’s clients were employed as of March 2007. Lisman put the focus on the client’s role in the program as he shared the stories of three veterans who have had great success in the Veterans Marching Home program.

“Mr. Franklin (last name deleted) came into our office straight out of DOC (Department of Corrections). He had some job skills, but had many setbacks due to DOC restrictions, criminal background checks, homelessness, and lack of transportation,” Lisman said. “With the help of HVRP, the client landed a permanent job with Colorado Hair Cutters. In less than two months he was able to secure his own apartment, and has done well at his job for over three months, making \$10 an hour. He is currently still working and maintaining his own apartment; he has been released from electronic monitoring device (a requirement from DOC), and continues to do well.”

Lisman also mentioned David (last name deleted), a veteran who entered the program in 2004. “We enrolled David into HVRP on November 8, 2004. He was homeless, unemployed, and generally distraught. He was able to find employment the same day with the assistance and encouragement of our program. At that time he became eligible for our housing program and was staying in a local shelter. He was a resident at the HVRP house. During this period he continued his employment and was able to save money for his own apartment. Since that time, he is still employed, has received two raises, and as of February 2005, has his own apartment.”

The third example Lisman gave was Sean (last name deleted), enrolled in HVRP on September 14, 2005. “He had recently been released from DOC. He was in need of housing and employment. By September 23, Sean was working full time. One week later we had moved him into the HVRP transitional housing program. There he was able to open his savings account, and get a second job with National Multi List Service, Inc. doing phones sales. In two months he had saved his money and was able to get his own apartment. He is doing well and is very successful.”

These examples show the success that Veterans Marching Home has in working with homeless veterans to help them find both employment and housing despite difficult barriers. The focus on each individual client helps empower them to achieve the goals set out upon entry into the program.

The municipal government, service provider and assistance agency collaboration represented by the Denver Department of Human Services is rare, but the success of the program warrants its inclusion as a replicable best practice in the field of public assistance and homeless services. The HVRP funding allows the program to focus on veterans, while connecting them with mainstream assistance they might otherwise not be able to access. The program’s success with formerly incarcerated veterans is particularly noteworthy. The provision of transitional housing along with employment preparation and job placement services is a practical example of the promise of the DOL-VETS HVRP program, both to the homeless veterans it serves and to the communities that support their veterans through effective, successful assistance networks.

<b>Denver DHS HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	480	480	100%
Program Enrollments	300	270	90%
Employment Placements	225	201	89%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$9.00	\$10.19	113%
Placed in permanent housing	35	36	103%
Employment After 90 Days	125	107	86%

- For more information about the Denver Department of Human Services programs, go to: <http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/>.
- For information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **HVAF of Indiana Inc. – Indianapolis Case Management Key to HVRP Success**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports that there are more than 3,500 homeless veterans on any given night in Indiana. In 1993 Hoosier Veterans Assistance Foundation (HVAF), then known as the Indiana Chapter of Far From Home, Inc., was created to help in efforts to address this problem. In 2000, HVAF opened the Veterans Service Center, a one-stop facility offering a full range of services for homeless veterans.

Individuals become homeless for a variety of reasons. Often when a veteran becomes homeless, it is due to barriers to employment such as mental illness. HVAF is the recipient of a Special Needs grant from the VA that dictates they focus on veterans with chronic mental illnesses and extreme obstacles to employment. This population is supported with employment assistance by the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant which HVAF began receiving in 2005 at a level of \$254,012. The funding remained at that level for a second year in Program Year 2006.

HVAF does not use any other funding sources to support this assistance program for veterans with serious health barriers to employment. Since the implementation of the program, HVAF has been able to extend the same employment support to veteran clients who are not enrolled in this specialized HVRP program.

Authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access employment training and placement assistance. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), and is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans. The HVRP grant program is extremely competitive; fewer than half the organizations that apply for the program receive funding.

Cindy Thomas, Executive Vice President of HVAF, says: “Those veterans with a chronic mental illness require more intensive case management in order to help them get hired and maintain their jobs and housing. Staff need to be certain that their symptoms are stabilized; that is, they are taking any medications prescribed and receiving counseling as needed. Occasionally, staff may need to advocate and educate an employer on a client’s behalf. Staff also intervenes with the client if they feel he or she may be at risk of losing a job. For example, if they aren’t calling in when sick, why not?” Thomas added, “These clients may need to improve their coping skills on the job more than others, such as appropriate anger management.”

HVAF has incorporated its goals for their VA special needs grant with the employment assistance grant, aiming to reintegrate 25% of its veteran clients with mental illness back into society and placed in employment through the HVRP program.

A key to reaching homeless veterans in any community is outreach, and HVAF makes this a priority by going into area shelters and into the streets to seek out veterans in need of assistance. Once they are identified, these veterans have access to all of the services

they may need through HVAF's Veterans Service Center. The Center offers food, clothing, furniture for those moving into new housing units, 12 transitional homes that offer 80 beds for veterans, social workers assigned to assist veterans throughout their participation in various programs, referrals to permanent supportive housing, and substance abuse treatment and emergency beds.

HVAF's housing facilities are located throughout Indianapolis. There are 11 homes and one apartment building. "The first one opened in 1996 with five veterans," said Thomas. "The first five homes opened from 1996 through 2000. These five group homes are scattered throughout the city and house 25 veterans. The apartment building opened in 2001 with a total of 13 veteran residents. The property was donated by Rep. Julia Carson (7<sup>th</sup> District, IN), who lives behind the apartment building. The last six homes, for a total of 40 veterans, opened in 2003 with the support of different organizations including Eli Lilly and Company." These six homes are located together, and were formerly abandoned buildings on the grounds of the former Central State Hospital.

HVAF has learned its focus on veterans suffering from chronic mental illness presents a different set of challenges than those presented by its other homeless veteran clients, and preparing them for employment is not easy. These clients may need to work around counseling appointments and require more intensive case management. Employers need to be aware of these issues and be willing to work with the program staff to ensure client success and a feeling of acceptance.

HVAF partners with Westside Community Ministries to strengthen its HVRP program. Westside provides a wide range of employment services, including classes on resume building, interviewing skills, and pre-employment skills training. The Westside staff also helps program participants find and apply for jobs that match their skills and experience. Veterans have continuous, direct contact with job developers to ensure their job search proceeds in an effective manner. Referrals to potential employers, GED and other educational assistance, and transportation assistance are also provided through this partnership.

HVAF's collaboration with Westside Community Ministries began when one of the organization's board members and the director of Westside worked out a lease agreement for Westside to house two of HVAF programs in its facility. While sharing space with Westside, HVAF staff learned of their employment program, and Westside staff began searching for employment opportunities for HVAF clients. Eventually, HVAF decided to enter into a contract with Westside to supervise all employment placements for its HVRP program participants.

HVAF partners with many other agencies in the Indianapolis area in order to provide the most effective services to the homeless population:

- United Way of Central Indiana provides housing, substance abuse treatment, and mental health treatment through a contract agreement.

- The Indianapolis VA Medical Center provides transitional housing for homeless veterans through a contract agreement under the Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program.
- HVAF also collaborates with the Coalition for Homeless Intervention and Prevention in assisting all homeless people.
- The mayor of Indianapolis has a “Blueprint to End Homelessness,” and HVAF is the lead agency for coordinating all services for homeless veterans under this plan.

HVAF has found that veterans have success in a variety of jobs, depending on their abilities, but one company that has been an especially strong partner is a local warehousing and stocking company with positions that offer flexible hours and shifts that allow the veterans to attend appointments and support groups in which they may be involved. Westside manages the placements and has developed strong relationships with several companies who hire veterans from HVAF’s program, including other storage and warehousing companies, construction companies, a security guard firm, the VA Medical Center, and several other local businesses.

To ensure effective follow-up and tracking of veterans, HVAF sends post cards and makes phone calls just to keep in touch. They also offer incentives after certain periods of time, for instance after 90 days a participant may receive a Wal-Mart gift card, or a gas or phone card. As their time on the job increases, and they advance toward the goals included in their personal development plans, the incentives become more valuable.

<b>HVAF of Indiana HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	205	328	99%
Program Enrollments	82	71	87%
Employment Placements	41	36	88%
Average hourly wage @ placement	8.40	8.40	100%
Placed in permanent housing	57	54	95%
Employment After 90 Days	18	17	94%

- For more information about HVAF of Indiana, go to: [www.hvaf.org](http://www.hvaf.org).
- For information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Volunteers of America of Kentucky and Tennessee HVRP Program is Model for Rural Areas**

Not long ago, homeless veterans in Eastern Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia and the Virginia highlands had little hope of re-entering the workforce. In 1993, Volunteers of America of Kentucky and Tennessee decided to act on their belief that these men and women, who have served their country with honor, deserve a helping hand to help them return to self-sufficiency and a sense of dignity. That year the organization applied for a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VET). They received a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP) grant of \$110,000, which allowed them to start a comprehensive employment assistance program on Veterans Day 1993. Since then, the program has provided employment to thousands of veterans in one of the most beautiful – but poverty stricken – regions in the nation.

The HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans obtain vital assistance in order to re-enter the workforce. These men and women frequently face special challenges such as legal issues, mental and physical illnesses and substance abuse problems. HVRP is funded under the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) in compliance with 38 United States Code, Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. It is the only federal program that focuses specifically on providing employment opportunities for homeless veterans.

The VOA employment assistance programs funded by HVRP and headquartered in Pikeville, KY, serve an area where residents face many challenges, such as the lack of public transportation and an unemployment rate of 15%. Finding employment in this area is difficult; and when added to the burden of being homeless, it can seem hopeless. The VOA Kentucky and Tennessee HVRP programs were awarded \$500,000 in HVRP grants for Program Year 2007 to serve a vast mountainous area reaching into four states.

The VOA HVRP staff has learned quite a bit over the last 14 years about helping homeless veterans find employment. They help homeless veterans prepare for job searches and placement, provide referrals for housing, help them apply for supportive services, and offer limited case management.

VOA recognizes that people trying to become stable and independent in their work life need to achieve stability in their home life as well. The staff believes that aggressive outreach is the key to the success of the project, as veterans in the area are often isolated, lack transportation, and do not always know what supportive services are available or where to apply for them.

By providing housing for homeless veterans and connecting them with existing supportive service providers, VOA enhances the likelihood they can succeed in finding gainful employment. The staff constantly advocates for their clients to ensure that services are accessible and coordinated. After 13 years of service to the community, the VOA HVRP program has become the referral resource center for a wide range of veteran

assistance projects. Staff maintain a close relationship with county social services agencies, Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Offices, the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, and the region's landlords who provide veterans with housing opportunities. Most of the coordination of local services is accomplished without formal memorandums of understanding.

VOA believes that a strong focus on job retention is the key to successful program outcomes. Clients are provided with housing and other services to maximize their potential for success, which has led to an impressive number of successful long-term placements. The key to their method is a focus on assessing the specific abilities of the veteran and matching them with employers who are interested in hiring them. VOA facilitates this matching process, offering support, encouragement and referral services as needed.

VOA makes a daily effort to build on its network of partners, including local nonprofit groups, landlords, government agencies and employers. This communication helps clients overcome major barriers to employment. An example of effective collaboration is providing transportation. Some partner employers set up car pools for clients who do not have vehicles. Constant communication with landlords often makes placement in housing possible for homeless veterans on the day of their intake into the program.

VOA provides vital employment and supportive services to more than 200 homeless veterans a year, and achieves a successful housing and job placement rate of 94% at an average cost of \$2,205 per individual. Without the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, it is doubtful homeless veterans in this expansive, rural area would have any access to employment assistance, and little chance of regaining their self esteem and economic independence.

<b>VOA of KY and TN HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	225	214	95%
Assessments	384	452	118%
Employment Placement	153	164	107%
Permanent housing placement	225	209	93%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.95	\$8.82	99%

■ For more information about the Volunteers of America of Kentucky and Tennessee program, call 502-636-0771.

■ For more information about HVRP, go to: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Maine Department of Labor HVRP Serves Statewide Network**

Maine's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) began as a rural project to serve homeless veterans in the state's two southernmost counties, York and Cumberland. However, after early success, the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) approved an expansion of the program to reach all 16 counties in the state. The HVRP program is run by The Training Resource Center (TRC), a career counseling and job training organization for veterans and the general population.

TRC began as a part of the Cumberland County government in Maine in the 1970s, providing services to unemployed and underemployed workers. TRC incorporated as a nonprofit in 1986 so that it could expand its services and better serve its unemployed clients. In 1994, TRC introduced the Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) in Maine, expanding its services statewide. In 1999, the agency began serving homeless veterans, acquiring its first HVRP grant in 2000. Currently, TRC has a total budget of \$4.5 million and operates satellite offices in Lewiston, Bangor, Augusta and Farmington, along with the headquarters in Portland.

HVRP services are available at all of Maine's CareerCenters, but TRC operates the Veterans Career House in Biddeford, a rural town in Maine. The first facility of its kind in the state, Veterans Career House is a combined transitional housing and employment program that was developed to provide safe, supportive housing to homeless veterans. Its mission is to help homeless veterans make the transition to employment, permanent housing, and independent living. Residents are offered a stable environment with supportive services for up to a 24-month stay.

TRC receives \$199,777 in HVRP funding, and leverages that with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds, along with grant funds from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) under the Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program. The Veterans Career House uses Grant and Per Diem funds from the VA to fund beds and supportive services such as medical and mental health services.

WIA funds, allocated to each state by the Department of Labor (DOL), support Maine's 22 CareerCenters. At these CareerCenters staff serve men and women seeking employment, including veterans, as well as employers. According to Barry Peaco, Program Manager of the HVRP program at the Training Resource Center, "This means that any veterans seeking services are immediately entered into the WIA and Vocational Rehabilitation system, thereby setting him or her up for potential co-enrollment in multiple programs instead of just HVRP. The possibility then exists for them to tap into additional funds for training, including longer-term courses and job coaching services that would not normally be available through HVRP alone."

The Maine HVRP program provides outreach, pre-enrollment assessments, access to transitional housing, substance abuse and recovery referrals through the Maine Department of Veterans Affairs, help in developing an individual Employment

Development Plan (EDP), job training activities, and job placement and follow-up services.

The Employment Development Plan is a document created and signed by both the HVRP client, and his or her career guidance counselor. The EDP addresses all existing job skills, barriers to employment, military history, job and training goals, and other employment search related information. The EDP sets forth a job training plan documenting milestones, accomplishments, setbacks, and any obstacles the client encounters while working toward the goal of reintegration into the work force and self sufficiency. Each client meets regularly with their counselor to review and revise the EDP so that it reflects the true progress made.

Peaco said that Maine HVRP has been successful because of the program's ability to form strategic partnerships. Certain partnerships have been particularly instrumental in this success. One is the total integration with the Maine DOL's 22 CareerCenters, and full engagement of Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) staff. Generally, the DVOP works closely with clients, employers and case managers to ensure job placements; and LVERs develop employment opportunities with the state's business and industrial community. This has been a driving force behind the success of the program because it spreads HVRP's services and outreach across the entire state.

Peaco also emphasized the importance of Maine HVRP's collaborations with the several homeless service providers throughout the state, notably homeless shelters, substance abuse treatment centers, municipal public assistance officials, and ever-strengthening links with veteran service organizations (VSOs).

The Veterans Career House in Biddeford was created as a result of collaboration with Community Housing of Maine. The agency helped Maine HVRP secure this transitional housing facility that serves homeless veterans exclusively. The principal funding for the project comes from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Key partners in this service network include:

- Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services
- Community Housing of Maine
- Maine Bureau of Rehabilitative Services
- Maine Veterans Services
- Veteran Service Organizations (American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars)
- Maine Homeless Veterans Stand Down Committee

With a program encompassing the entire state of Maine, there are many areas the HVRP program must serve, and Peaco says rural homelessness is quite different from urban homelessness. Because the rural homeless are not right on the street and visible like the urban homeless tend to be, the HVRP staff must frequently go into the field to seek out

homeless veterans who need help but are unable to access it, or do not know assistance is available.

TRC was fortunate to be able to recruit a formerly homeless veteran to add to its HVRP staff as a peer outreach counselor. Peaco says this addition brought immediate credibility to the program, as this representative can relate to what homeless veterans are experiencing and help them understand how HVRP can provide a way to successfully re-enter employment and regain their place in society as productive citizens.

Again mentioning outreach, Peaco said, “We cannot stress enough the importance of outreach to engage potential participants. Each year we have increased our efforts in this area to strengthen program awareness. We have also built strategic partnerships with homeless shelters and service providers and have committed to TRC participation in special events such as the annual Stand Down, job fairs, and veteran-specific events. When we expanded the scope of the project to the entire state of Maine, we ensured that we had sufficient resources dedicated to participant outreach, particularly in the most rural areas.”

Rural homelessness is a unique circumstance which Peaco says requires better understanding by service providers and grantmakers. “Perhaps a separate eligibility definition is needed to fully capture all potential participants.” He explained that individuals experiencing homelessness in rural areas require creative outreach techniques to engage them in programs. “In many cases, they have become quite adept in existing literally on their own, including food gathering, shelter building, and navigating. So for some individuals the idea of returning to a structured environment with strict day-to-day responsibilities can be intimidating.”

For this reason, Peaco said, many veterans who are brought into homeless assistance programs soon disappear when those programs and the pressure of personal responsibilities become too overwhelming for them. The answer, he said, is keeping them involved and committed with skilled and experienced staff that understand the fragility of their situation.

<b>Maine HVRP Outcomes – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	96	106	110%
Program Enrollments	83	81	98%
Employment Placements	30	36	120%
Average hourly wage @ placement	9.25	10.33	112%
Placed in permanent housing	18	19	106%
Employment After 90 Days	10	15	150%

In the past program year, Maine HVRP exceeded all of its program goals, which have steadily increased since the first funding cycle. Peaco said, “We have established ourselves as a valuable component in Maine’s efforts to end homelessness as a key player

in the annual Homeless Vet Stand Down where we provide financial and staff support.” The recent addition of the Veterans Career House has had an immediate positive impact on the services Maine HVRP can provide in improving the lives of homeless veterans. The unique capability of the Veterans Career House to provide transitional housing, supportive services and comprehensive job training and placement assistance has never before existed in the state of Maine before this collaborative program was developed and implemented.

- For more information about the Maine Department of Labor, go to: <http://www.maine.gov/labor/>.
- For information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training is a Military Academy with a Special Mission**

The Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training (MCVET), a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation located in Baltimore, has been helping homeless veterans since its founding in 1993. On May 7, 1997, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) declared that MCVET was the “National Model” for community-based organizations providing seamless, comprehensive service delivery systems for homeless veterans.

Using a military-style social and leadership structure, and a college campus community atmosphere, MCVET today boasts a \$3 million annual budget and innovative programs that offer more than 500 formerly homeless veterans supportive services ranging from emergency shelter to permanent housing; from employment readiness and job training to steady, gainful employment in high paying jobs, trades and professions; and from substance abuse treatment to behavior modification and self-improvement courses. Nearly four dozen specialists – case managers, clinical psychologists, housing program managers, employment specialists, benefits counselors, facility managers – provide assistance and round-the-clock supervision for program residents. Education is such an important focus of the MCVET program that residents are referred to as “students,” and they work toward “graduation” to self-reliance, economic independence and community involvement.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of the value of the MCVET military academy model is the number of former students who now provide assistance to other homeless veterans struggling with the demons and challenges they once encountered. They serve as examples of what is possible, and are keenly aware of the obstacles students must overcome.

In April 1999, MCVET enhanced its employment services when it received a grant of \$70,000 from the Department of Labor Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP). The center’s HVRP program has grown every year, and in 2003 it was awarded \$203,558, which was used to provide intensive employment services to approximately 200 homeless veterans facing significant barriers to employment.

The HVRP program is dedicated to assisting homeless veterans who are frequently unable to access traditional employment services due to psychosocial, physical and legal challenges. Employment assistance programs that receive HVRP grants must apply as a first-year program every three years, and apply for annual renewals during the other two.

The MCVET military model program stresses the principles of individual accountability, self-discipline, organization and teamwork. Residents are organized into platoons and squads. Students are accountable to each other, their fellow platoon members, and the designated platoon leadership. All residents are expected by their peers to be accountable for their actions. This order and structure replaces the chaos they have experienced while homeless and prepares them for reentry into the community.

The highly structured and closely monitored social order is not universally accepted within the social services community, nor should it be. The military academy environment, however, makes it an ideal option for individuals who are working to regain self-esteem and self discipline, and who need strong supervision in the beginning of their development programs. MCVET prides itself in embracing “hard-to-place” veterans and helping them change their lives. As Executive Director Col. Charles Williams points out, “The program works for individuals who would almost certainly fail in other facilities, if they were admitted in the first place.”

The HVRP program has become an integral part of the continuum of services provided by MCVET. The fundamental approach to homeless services is to provide assistance through a continuum of incremental steps that enable students to rejoin their communities as productive citizens. For the first three months, homeless veterans are placed in emergency housing where case managers help determine their needs and challenges, ensure that all benefit resources are accessed, and help them set education and employment goals. Students who suffer from mental illness or substance abuse issues begin receiving treatment. This is a critical component of the enrollment process because more than 98% of homeless veterans who enter the MCVET program have addiction problems, and more than 80% have mental disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Most of the veterans who complete the emergency housing program will still need supportive services and housing. These individuals are admitted to the transitional housing program for up to two years, where substance abuse counseling and mental health treatment continues and life skills classes are provided. Along the way, clients are enrolled in the Education, Training and Employment Program (ETE), where individual training needs are assessed and classes are provided. Upon successful completion of the ETE program, students are referred to employment services.

The Employment Services Program provides intensive job development, job search, labor market information, assisted placement, job workshops, resume preparation and interview skills training. HVRP funding pays for the salary of an employment program coordinator, who provides career and employment counseling, assessments and referrals to employers. This resource is complemented by a DOL Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist, who conducts pre-employment and resume training on the MCVET campus.

Most recently, HVRP funding increases have made it possible to purchase computer equipment and training materials for on-site training programs. Instruction is now available in skilled vocations such as heating and air conditioning, accounting, mechanical trades, and computer systems management. These improvements have allowed program graduates to earn, on average, almost 30% more than other veterans who did not participate in the program. MCVET provides a wide range of employment services for its students in a centralized location. This “one-stop” model is successful because it maximizes the ability of residents to access all available programs without having to travel to distant locations. It also improves communication among agency

employees working with clients at different levels of the development process. Both factors reduce the number of students who fall through the cracks of traditional service delivery models.

Another requirement for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities served. This includes communicating the availability of services that are provided by nearby agencies and organizations, and collaborating with them to maximize the support available to program participants. MCVET benefits from the assistance of several community partners, including:

- Department of Veterans Affairs – health care, outpatient substance abuse, mental health services
- Department of Labor – HVRP, employment specialist training
- Department of Housing and Urban Development – provides MCVET with section-8 vouchers for permanent, subsidized housing
- Maryland State Department of Rehabilitative Services – educational funding and assistance
- Baltimore City Office of Homeless Services – refers veterans to MCVET
- United Way/Combined Federal Campaign/Maryland Combined Campaign
- Maryland Job Services – provides a DVOP onsite at MCVET campus
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Maryland Energy Assistance Program

<b>MCVET HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	160	157	98%
Assessments	240	241	100%
Employment Placement	120	112	93%
Permanent housing placement	160	157	98%
Average wage at job placement	\$9.00	\$13.49	150%

During the 2006 fiscal year, 157 veterans registered in education and training program through this program, while 120 veterans were placed in full-time unsubsidized employment with an average salary of \$13.49 per hour.

- For more information on MCVET, go to: <http://www.mcvet.org>.
- For more information on HVRP, go to: <http://www.dol.gov/vets>.

## **Massachusetts Veterans Inc. – Worcester HVRP Enhanced by Wrap-Around Services**

In the beginning of the 1990s, a group of Vietnam veterans banded together to open a homeless shelter for fellow veterans in Worcester, MA. In 1991, the group formed a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the homeless veteran population in Central Massachusetts. With assistance from the state of Massachusetts, volunteers and labor unions, we opened a shelter in a National Guard armory that had been abandoned, condemned and slated for demolition. The shelter served as a temporary home for nine clients when it opened its doors in 1992. In the 15 years since, Massachusetts Veterans, Inc. (MVI) has expanded to provide housing and supportive services to more than 150 homeless veterans every day.

Since 2000, MVI has been operating the MVI Employment and Training Division (MVI ETD) to help homeless veterans prepare for and find employment. The program now operates in most of the state.

In FY 2007, MVI received two grants directly from the Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Trainings Services (DOL-VETS) Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP), and is a sub-grantee through the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services on a third grant. MVI ETD has a current budget of \$708,799, with \$454,169 funded through the DOL-VETS HVRP program, and the rest coming from other sources.

The HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans who are often unable to access traditional employment services due to legal issues, mental and physical health challenges and drug addiction. HVRP, authorized in 1987 under Section 738 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance act, and administered by the Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), is the only national program that specifically targets homeless veterans. While some HVRP programs have been in existence for several years, providers must reapply as a first-year program every three years.

The MVI ETD employment program involves providing needed wrap-around services that maximize client success in securing employment and achieving self-sufficiency. Employment services that are provided include job counseling and assessment; pre-employment services such as interview training, application and resume completion; internet job search instruction; training; and job placement services.

Wrap-around services that are an integral part of the program include transitional housing, clothing, medical and substance abuse treatment referrals, and transportation assistance.

Employment specialists provide one-on-one case management to clients. They help clients conduct job searches, provide job coaching, schedule interviews and ensure clients receive the transportation assistance they need to get to interviews and job sites. Clients

are encouraged to enroll in training courses at the MVI Training Academy. The academy has instituted an internationally recognized certification and testing course provided free of charge to clients. Of note, the Academy is licensed by the MA Department of Education, and a certified training provider through the MA Department of Career Services. In addition to pre-employment workshops such as life skills, money management, resume writing and interviewing skills, courses include basic computer literacy, Internet 101, Microsoft Office Suite classes including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook Mail and Calendar, and A+ certification preparation class and Microsoft Certification classes, including MCP, MCDST, MOUS, and more.

MVI owns and operates the Mobile Education Center, a handicapped-accessible, 32-foot recreational vehicle equipped with 12 Dell computers. This innovative resource is used to expand access to computer training in several rural sites.

Affiliate-provided training is also offered in Construction Supervisor training, leading to licensure. MVI ETD has developed close relationships with the VA's Veterans Construction Team (VCT), a specialized component of the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program, as well as area employers in the construction industry. Licensed Construction Supervisors earn salaries of more than \$25 per hour.

The organization has increased its interaction with local employers to help identify employment opportunities. In addition, the MVI ETD has instituted an online job club and email program for resources sharing.

HVRP programs are expected to provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities they serve. MVI collaborates with local community-based organizations and government agencies to improve and expand services for its clients, including:

- Massachusetts Veterans Outreach Centers
- The Puerto Rican Veterans' Association of Massachusetts
- United Veterans of America
- Veterans Transition House
- Transitional housing programs across the state
- Government agencies, including VA hospitals and clinics
- The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars
- One-stop work centers throughout the state

The Department of Labor traditionally approves HVRP programs that include innovative practices that can be replicated in other parts of the country. According to Allison Alaimo, MVI Employment and Training Manager, the Employment and Training Division is innovative in its approach to the care and rehabilitation of homeless veterans because of its focus on employment as the means to end homelessness. The goals established within each employment plan are individualized and attainable because they are based on a comprehensive understanding of the needs and skills of each client. The program focuses on meaningful job placements to help with job retention and includes

follow up efforts to ensure that those who find employment and housing have the resources they need to avoid returning to the street.

<b>Massachusetts Veterans Inc. HVRP – FY 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	120	102	85%
Program Enrollments	72	71	99%
Employment Placements	43	36	84%
Average hourly wage @ placement	9.25	10.05	109%
Placed in permanent housing	25	22	88%
Employment After 90 Days	0	19	

In order to determine the level of success each HVRP program achieves, DOL assesses outcomes that are compared to goals outlined in each organization’s application. Grant recipients must file quarterly reports with the department. Massachusetts Veterans Inc. exceeded most of its program goals by large margins.

According to the above measurements, the MVI program has earned high marks in enrollments, pre-employment services, occupational skills training, direct employment placement and hourly wages. The program has improved in employment retention and assisted placement. All other areas are well on track to exceed program goals.

The combination of services, collaboration with the community, and the extensive outreach efforts provided by MVI constitute an effective, model program that other homeless veteran employment programs can implement. The program provides modern, useful computer training that gives homeless veterans skills that may not be possessed by other job applicants, and the mobile education center takes the training where clients need it. This innovative approach to employment training and outreach has earned MVIETD recognition as a national HVRP best practice.

- For more information on MVI see: <http://www.massveterans.org>.
- For more Information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets>.

## **Veterans Benefit Clearinghouse HVRP Provides Training Targeted to Manpower Shortages**

Located in Foxbury, MA, Veterans Benefit Clearinghouse Inc. (VBC) began its veteran assistance program in 1992. Formed to focus on the homeless veteran, the organization was originally called Vets Path, but the name was later changed to reflect the expansion of its services to meet an ever-increasing need for public assistance programs to help the poor and otherwise underserved communities in a large metropolitan area.

The VBC Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) receives funding from several sources, including the Department of Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem program, the State of Massachusetts Department of Veteran Services, a Community Block Grant from the City of Boston, and private foundations and individuals. For the first three years of Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) funding, VBC received \$100,000 per year, and did not receive a grant in 1996. From 1997-1999, the VBC HVRP program was funded at \$150,000. For Program Year 2007, VBC was awarded a \$296,900 HVRP grant.

The VBC program specifically targets the homeless veteran population in the Boston area. Participant demographics are: 85% African American, 10% Caucasian, and 5% Hispanic; 15% are women, and 85% are men. The overall population is about 50% veterans, and the other half are family members and dependents of veterans.

Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse feels that it is necessary to provide a wide range of services to its clients. Services available to HVRP program participants include case management and counseling, employment training and placement, pre-vocational training, emergency services – food pantry, rental assistance, utilities assistance, housing (SRO) and housing placement (section 8) – and health education. These services cover the entire continuum of care, and enables homeless veterans to return to society as productive, independent citizens at a much quicker rate

When VBC first received HVRP funding, it was basically a homeless program aimed at providing shelter. Since then the organization has been able to focus on employment readiness services and job placement. VBC has added additional services such as computer training and emergency supportive services to its assistance programs. With the increasing value of technology in the workplace, VBC feels that computer skills are vital to its clients' success in searching for and gaining employment. By working with and maintaining communication with area employers, staff have discovered where the region's manpower shortages are, and VBC has been able to prepare its clients for those targeted employment opportunities.

In addition to providing employment counseling, job readiness courses, job referrals and placement services, VBC provides employment-specific training for program participants. A unique aspect of VBC's program is its internal employment training programs specializing in the medical and computer technology fields. Allied Health Training prepares people to become medical assistants, phlebotomists, laboratory

assistants and medical receptionists. Graduates who complete this short-term classroom and hands-on training program are given assistance to find jobs paying up to \$15.00 per hour. The Computer Training Laboratory provides residents of Greater Roxbury with affordable computer training and access to the type of computers they need to master in order to successfully compete for office and communications jobs. Both programs include pre-vocational skills training to prepare clients for their return to the work place.

One of the organization's great successes is its collaboration with more than 100 government agencies and community-based service providers. These partners help to provide employment services, assistance in applying for and obtaining veteran benefits, substance abuse treatment and counseling services, medical and mental health services, emergency and transitional housing, halfway houses, and HIV and AIDS resources. This collaboration has resulted in an increase in the number of veterans who receive assistance because of the cooperation among agencies providing specialized services.

Although VBC does not maintain formal memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with many of its collaborative agencies, its strategy is to belong to many of the state's collaborative service provider groups. These include the Human Service Providers, Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, Boston Workforce Development Collaborative, Timothy Smith Network, and the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, to mention a few. VBC staff serve on the boards of directors of all those coalitions. Working relationships are maintained through monthly meetings. This network of service providers is key to the success of the VBC program, promoting the reputation and visibility of its services and success within the service provider community.

The foundation of VBC's employment services program is effective case management. Staff are experienced working with veterans who have experienced long-term homelessness and frequent substance abuse. Many of the program clients are struggling with one or more serious barriers to re-entering the workforce.

VBC's Counseling, Information and Referral Services links individuals and families in crisis to VBC programs and other needed services. Staff provide individual and group counseling designed to help veterans find employment, housing programs, resolve personal and family crises, and deal with other stress issues they may face. Specialty counseling is also provided to help veterans work through Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and emotional problems. This one-on-one focus allows the case manager to get to know the client and better understand what support he or she may need. A relationship of trust develops gradually, which results in an individual plan that enhances the veteran's prospects for gainful employment.

During the last year of HVRP funding, the VOC program was within 15% of all its goals, exceeding the target in several categories. The average range was 92-108%. During the immediate future, VBC hopes to expand its programs to help a larger percentage of the area's increasing homeless veteran population.

<b>VBC, Roxbury, HVRP Outcomes – PY 2005</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	80	80	100%
Assessments	120	116	97%
Employment Placement	48	48	100%
Permanent housing placement	0	46	
Average wage at job placement	\$8.25	\$11.80	143%

Considering the challenges its homeless veteran clients must overcome for successful re-entry into the work place – many are dealing with several – and the heavy caseload the organization tries to help, the outcomes of the Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse are commendable. The success of the VBC program depends on highly skilled and dedicated staff connecting homeless veterans to the benefits and services provided by an extensive care provider network. The employment assistance program is deemed as the critical component of the VBC continuum of care model.

Perhaps just as important is VBC's work to strengthen that network and its continuing efforts to advocate for the integration of available services into a system that provides comprehensive assistance to all of the city's homeless individuals and families.

- For more information about the Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse HVRP program, go to: [www.vbcbboston.org](http://www.vbcbboston.org).
- For information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Michigan Veterans Foundation Serves as Model for Collaborative Service Delivery**

In 2000, the Michigan Veterans Foundation applied to the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) for a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP) grant to develop an employment assistance program for homeless veterans in the Detroit area. MVF was awarded a grant of \$246,050 and opened the Detroit Veterans Center-Project Charge (also known as HVRP-Detroit) in May. The program, now funded at \$295,800, has received HVRP funding every year since, and continues to provide services tailored specifically to the needs of homeless veterans.

Clients of HVRP-Detroit are offered a wide variety of services, which are coordinated according to the needs of each individual. Each veteran receives an employability assessment when beginning the program. Individual development plans are developed and take into account such factors as physical and mental condition, sobriety, employment history, education and training, interest and skills, and personal needs such as proper identification and clothing. Program participants are given life skills training and in-house employability training (Vision Quest). Classes combine basic job seeking etiquette with discussions about challenges to obtaining employment, interview skills, and staying sober while seeking employment and after being hired.

Veterans are entered in a vocational counseling program that begins the job placement process. This is accompanied by training in resume development and practice in mock interviews that will maximize client success during the recruitment process. Transportation assistance is available to help ensure that clients maintain attendance stability and opens up job opportunities in a larger area.

Depending on the individual development plan, veterans may receive financial assistance to cover the costs associated with obtaining vital records and photo identification cards, police clearances, uniforms or suitable work clothing, training fees, tools and relief from other financial obstacles to employment. This kind of support is rare and requires a significant collaboration among community-based organizations, government agencies and the business community.

Other services include:

- Outreach (actively seeking to enroll veterans who frequent other organizations that are not in the immediate vicinity of the DVC).
- On-site workshops provided by guest employers and social service providers
- Referral to educational or job training programs
- Relapse prevention services (in-house or referrals).
- Letters of recommendation, status or advocacy.

HVRP-Detroit has grown significantly since May 2000 in size and range of services that are available. It has increased from one room with a phone and a computer to a four-office complex that includes a bank of computers that serves as a job search lab. The program staff now includes a co-located veterans representative from the Michigan

Department of Labor and Economic Growth, who officially registers clients as job-seekers in the state employment services system. This improves the likelihood of success by widening the scope of job searches and increasing the number of employment opportunity leads.

Additional space and resources have led to several other positive changes, including improvements in:

- Accessibility to HVRP Staff
- Frequency and quality of classes and workshops
- Communication between clients and potential employers
- Self-esteem of both HVRP staff and veteran clients
- Storage space for interview clothing and hygiene supplies
- Professional atmosphere
- Online employment application assistance
- Classroom and study space with on-site library

One of the requirements for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities they serve. HVRP-Detroit has diligently worked to establish an extensive, collaborative network of resources to surround its clients with all possible services. Partners include:

Government agencies:

- Michigan Employment Commission (official registration for job seekers, job leads, online resumes)
- VA Medical Center, Detroit (outpatient substance abuse treatment, anger management counseling, all healthcare needs)
- VA Vet Centers
- The twelve chartered veteran service organizations
- VA Healthcare for Homeless Veterans
- Michigan Veterans Trust Fund
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services Wayne County Legal Services
- Wayne County Family Agency

Job skill and training programs:

- Wayne State University's Veterans Educational Opportunities Program (remedial education, computer applications training, educational counseling)
- Goodwill Industries (employment training for disabled clients)

Shelters:

- Salvation Army
- Detroit Rescue Mission

Collaborations serving the homeless:

- Committee On Temporary Shelter

- Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness
- Homeless Action Network
- AIDS Partnership of Michigan
- Collaborative on Offender Training and Employment (COTE) (serving clients on parole or probation with pre-employment training, resume assistance, clothing, bus tickets, and supervised job searches)
- Military Order of the Purple Heart

Medical, addiction and disability providers:

- Cass Methodist Hospital
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Mariners Inn Sobriety House
- Blue Water Center for Independent Living (independent living education and supportive services, and advocacy for clients with disabilities)

Other Non-profit organizations:

- Forgotten Harvest
- Neighborhood Services Organization
- Operation Get Down
- Operation Helping Hand
- Traveler's Aid Society
- Society of St. Vincent DePaul (furniture, clothing)
- Jewish Vocational Services (job leads, bus tickets, eyeglasses, dentures, janitorial training, time-limited computer lab, resume assistance, relapse prevention)

The HVRP-Detroit program has demonstrated a high level of success in connecting homeless veterans with the services and training they need in order to find and retain employment, housing, and stability. Almost every performance goal outlined in the MVF grant proposal has been met or exceeded.

The key to the success of HVRP-Detroit, according to Tobi Geibig, Executive Director of MVF, is “facilitating an understanding of the special problems and needs of veterans to other social service and government agencies through active collaboration.” That extensive partnership allows homeless veterans to benefit from the broadest possible spectrum of supportive services. They are also assured of basic necessities, such as housing, food, counseling and health care.

Active collaboration by HVRP-Detroit has led to some very impressive achievements, including::

- Incorporation into the Michigan Veterans Foundation / Detroit Veterans Center, allowing our clients immediate access to shelter, food, clothing, and counseling.
- Co-location of a Department of Labor & Economic Growth, Employment Service Agency employee on-site (as mentioned earlier)

- Expedited employment consideration for our clients with private employers including Compuware, MGM Grand (Detroit), Sams’ Club, Express Personnel Services, Labor Ready Inc., Securitas, Fishbones Restaurants Inc., Goodwill Industries, and a host of smaller corporations and companies. Most of these employers provide on-the -job training.
- Onsite establishment of a Blue Water/Wayne County Center for Independent Living Satellite Office, serving our clients with independent living skills classes and access to a variety of social and economic services.
- Collaboration with local shelters in identifying homeless Veterans in order to keep Veterans informed of our available services.

HVRP-Detroit leadership hopes in the future to develop a “one-stop shop” of co-located homeless service providers offering a full range of employment, educational, social and medical services for clients. While this is an ambitious goal, with the innovative and replicable program developed by the Michigan Veterans Foundation, it may just be possible.

<b>Michigan Veterans Foundation HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	189	204	108%
Assessments	345	355	103%
Employment Placement	123	125	102%
Permanent housing placement	169	181	107%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.75	\$10.10	115%

■ For more information on Michigan Veterans Foundation, see: <http://www.michiganveteransfoundation.org>.

■ For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans Employment Program Depends on Partnerships**

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV), located in Minneapolis, has been helping veterans for over 14 years, serving over 3,000 veterans during that time with a wide range of housing and outreach services in a seven-county area. MACV, determined to increase the level of employment and housing services provided to homeless veterans in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, was awarded a Department of Labor Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP) grant in March 2000. Funding for the organization's employment assistance program has been renewed every year since, supporting the organization's efforts to move homeless veterans away from the street and into employment and stable housing.

The HVRP program is dedicated to assisting homeless veterans who are frequently unable to access traditional employment services. These individuals frequently face special challenges, including legal issues, mental and physical health challenges and drug addiction. HVRP, authorized in 1987 under Section 738 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, and administered by the Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans. Even the most successful HVRP programs must compete for grants as "first-year" applicants every three years.

MACV has used its HVRP grant to expand its reach into the metropolitan twin cities area, funding the salary of case managers and one metro regional director. One case manager, stationed at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center with Veterans Industries, completes the initial interviews, places the veteran in the work station and maintains contact with the VA clinical case managers as well as the job supervisor as part of the Employee Development Plan (EDP). The goal of the EDP is to prepare the veteran to enter the work force.

The HVRP Housing case manager interviews veterans to determine the appropriate housing setting for their needs. Once veterans are placed, they begin the process for movement from transitional to permanent housing. The housing plan is also part of the EDP.

The other two HVRP case managers work with local Department of Labor Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) to provide outreach focusing on recovery and the removal of barriers to employment and housing. Some of the areas of concern include focusing on sober living, money management and debt reduction.

The HVRP Metro Regional Director is responsible for all program integration in the seven-county metro area. The director makes sure that case management services, of which HVRP is the main recipient, are integrated with well maintained and available housing stock, which MACV owns or leases. The director makes sure that that support

services are provided by leveraging other funding sources. He also coordinates health care services for the veterans through VA.

Another requirement for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities served. This includes communicating the availability of the different services being provided, and collaborating with other organizations to maximize services for program clients. MACV works closely with:

- Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
- Minneapolis VA Medical Center
- Vets Center
- County veterans service officers
- Local workforce centers
- Local nonprofit organizations

By placing a case manager at the VA to work with homeless veteran clients, MACV is able to ensure that all necessary services and benefits are applied for and received. Case managers also work with VISN veterans health care workers to ensure that clients are able to get to their appointments at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. MACV works closely with the region's county veterans service officers, who provide eligible veterans and their dependents assistance with applications and claims for both federal and state veterans' benefits through agencies including the VA, Social Security Administration, Railroad Retirement Board, and Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. This network of support helps to ensure that homeless veterans will make it through the process of applying for benefits, gaining employment and, through MACV properties and state housing funding, are able to secure long-term residences that help to stabilize formerly homeless veterans as they return to the workforce.

MACV administers a sober program that requires clients to abstain from using alcohol and drugs according to practices based on the Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous traditions. It believes in a comprehensive, holistic approach to recovery from the complex challenges of homelessness. The success of this comprehensive program depends on working closely with other organizations to provide a full continuum of care.

MACV also provides a legal assistance service, funded through a DOL Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) grant, which helps veterans overcome barriers to employment and housing caused by legal problems. This is an example of MACV using an existing program to maximize its HVRP success.

The Department of Labor requires grant recipients to set program goals and to meet or exceed those during the program year. The MACV program has met or exceeded eight of 10 success measurements during the last fiscal year. While the program faced challenges keeping employees in jobs over 30 days, those they were able to place maintained employment at a highly successful rate. Those who found employment were paid approximately \$11.50 an hour, more than twice the minimum wage. This rate of pay makes it more likely that self-sufficiency will be attained.

<b>MACV HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	125	152	122%
Assessments	175	273	156%
Employment Placement	75	97	129%
Permanent housing placement	125	152	122%
Average wage at job placement	\$11.25	\$11.50	102%

MACV provides convenient, accessible assistance to homeless veterans where they are. It integrates its HVRP services with effective, already existing programs and collaborates with other organizations serving veterans to maximize successful outcomes. These successful outcomes are clearly illustrated with detailed measurement. MACV is an excellent, replicable example of how a caring, effective organization that understands its clients and the local service system can take the lead in developing a comprehensive approach to ending homelessness and helping veterans achieve self-sufficiency.

- For more information about the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans HVRP Program, go to <http://www.mac-v.org>
- For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **St. Patrick Center – St. Louis**

### **One-Stop Shop with Veteran-Specific Programs**

St. Patrick Center in St. Louis, MO, has been providing employment preparation and placement services to homeless veterans since 1988 when it first received funding under the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) through a City of St. Louis application. This faith-based organization has created a nationally recognized Partnership Center which houses St. Patrick Center's 22 programs focusing on housing, mental health and employment services, as well as 10 other partner organizations. St. Patrick Center offers a full array of services to homeless veterans, and to the general homeless population throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area.

The broad range of supportive services offered through the center provides a strong foundation for veterans who need assistance to re-enter the workforce. Men and women have access to housing referrals, transitional programs that cover the full continuum of care, health and legal services, and employment preparation and placement assistance. Through the years, St. Patrick Center has developed a strong relationship with a large network of employers, cultivated by employment specialists who communicate with employers and veterans throughout their participation in the HVRP program.

With an overall budget of over \$10 million, St. Patrick Center's one-stop human services center has become a model for homeless assistance programs around the country. In 1991, President George Bush named the St. Patrick Center as point 545 in his "1,000 Points of Light" initiative, through which he identified community organizations that have distinguished themselves in service to their communities.

St. Patrick Center receives \$300,000 in HVRP funds, but all other services on site are also available to veterans as needed. The organization is a member of the City of St. Louis Continuum of Care and receives HUD funds through St. Louis' Department of Human Services. The State of Missouri also offers tax-credit programs and housing funds. Local foundations provide additional financial support, as does Disabled American Veterans. Individual donations account for nearly one-third of the center's charitable income.

Part of the individual funding for St. Patrick Center comes from three annual special events. The Sports Trivia Championship has grown to become perhaps the largest sports trivia contest in the nation. Around 1,200 people compete, and the event is attended by sports celebrities and featured on the local FOX Sports Network. In 2006, this event raised \$225,000 for St. Patrick Center. The other major events are the St. Patrick's Irish Open golf tournament, and a "Pot of Gold" drive, which is similar to the Salvation Army's red kettle drives.

The list of service organizations that have partnered with the St. Patrick Center is a testament to its leadership role in developing an integrated regional network of caring and support for special needs populations.

- Grace Hill Health Services provides on-site health care, with Logan Chiropractic Clinic adding chiropractic services, BJC Behavioral Health providing mental health services, and Birthright supplying pregnancy resources.
- Catholic Charities Housing Resource Center contributes housing placements and utility assistance.
- St. Louis Community College instructors teach classes, including advanced computer training, keyboarding, customer service training, and food safety and sanitation.
- St. Louis Public Schools provides ABE/GED classes for clients who have not finished high school.
- St. Patrick Center serves the incarcerated and newly released veteran population.
- St. Joseph's Home and Family Support Services offers wraparound services for ex-offender re-entry.
- Criminal Justice Ministry of Society of St. Vincent de Paul doing outreach within the prison system. St. Patrick Center also has an onsite Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) representative.

HVRP-specific training opportunities include job-readiness classes, which feature soft skills, resume preparation and interview practice sessions that are critiqued by other class participants. HVRP clients are offered job training through the St. Patrick Center as well as St. Louis Community College classes, job search assistance and referrals to support services. Once veterans have addressed the issues that are barriers to their employment, they are ready to work with St. Patrick Center's Employment Specialists, who oversee a network of over 1,500 employers in the region who hire HVRP clients.

Employment Specialists actively participate in developing job leads with each client's case manager. They are involved in each step of the HVRP program process to ensure veterans are placed in jobs that will suit their abilities and needs. As clients are placed in jobs, the Employment Specialists will follow up with the employer at 30, 60, 90, 180 days and at one year.

A Retention Specialist was added to the staff over the summer to help ensure long-term veteran employment. Sergio Munoz, Manager of Employment Services, explained that this was formerly a part-time position, but they weren't effective enough without putting in full-time hours. They had problems with losing contact with clients, and the case managers were very busy with their own work. So, as they realized that the part-time position wasn't working, a handful of duties from different part-time positions were put together to form the full-time position of Retention Specialist. This development has resulted in marked improvement great in job retention outcomes.

St. Patrick Center supplies retention bonuses at six months and one year, which are extra funds built into the grant. A certain amount of money is set aside each quarter, for the six-month bonus and for the one-year bonus. At each milestone, those clients who have maintained their employment will have the funds divided among them. According to Munoz, this incentive is helpful in that it gives the veterans extra motivation to continue on their path to success. It is also a way to keep track of their progress, and to make sure

they stay involved with their support groups. It has been a successful tool that benefits all parties.

As St. Patrick Center has changed and expanded its services over the years, it has taken advantage of some unique opportunities to provide employment training to homeless veterans. One example is McMurphy's Grill, a lunchtime eatery that is owned and operated by the Center. McMurphy's Grill opened December 3, 1990, with the assistance of The Pasta House Company and additional grants from the Boeing Foundation and the Employee's Community Fund of Boeing St. Louis. The Grill is used to train clients in all aspects of the restaurant industry, and also provides hot lunches for clients and others in the community.

Another training opportunity is the Urban Farm Project, which primarily was created as a therapeutic program in partnership with the City Seeds program through a grant with St. Louis Community College. Munoz pointed out that it became a natural choice for an employment training opportunity in which participants are taught the basics of horticulture. The Missouri Department of Transportation supplied three acres of land for this program to start a garden to teach participants the basics of horticulture. Participants spend three days in the field and two days in the classroom each week learning skills that can lead to careers working in greenhouses, landscaping, and other related fields. Produce that is grown in the program is donated to rehabilitation centers, senior citizen homes, and farmer's markets. There are plans to possibly switch the program to a for-profit opportunity if client participation and production warrant.

<b>St. Patrick Center HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	200	426	213%
Program Enrollments	150	200	133%
Employment Placements	110	171	155%
Average hourly wage @ placement	8075	9.17	105%
Placed in permanent housing	50	99	198%
Employment After 90 Days	94	104	111%

- For more information about the St. Patrick Center, go to: <http://www.stpatrickcenter.org/>.
- For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Black Veterans for Social Justice Inc. Depends On Assessment for HVRP Program Success**

Established in April 1979, Black Veterans for Social Justice Inc. (BVSJ) is a nonprofit, community-based organization in Brooklyn, NY, that has served men and women veterans, their families and members of the community for 23 years. BVSJ serves an estimated 10,000 clients each year with an annual budget of about \$10 million. Several programs aimed at helping homeless veterans operate under the direction of the organization, other services are provided through memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with local community-based organizations and government agencies.

The BVSJ Homeless Veteran Reintegration Project (HVRP) focuses on providing employment services to homeless and previously homeless veterans. The program also provides guidance on filing claims for benefits, substance abuse treatment programs, and workshops pertaining to job search techniques and overcoming barriers to employment.

HVRP grants are awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), in compliance with the requirements of 38 United States Code, Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Section 2021 requires the Secretary of Labor to conduct, directly or through grant or contract, such programs as the Secretary determines appropriate to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force. HVRP is the only national employment program that specifically targets homeless veterans.

Black Veterans for Social Justice strives to serve not only homeless veterans, but their families and their communities. The founders believe that despite the hardships individuals may encounter during military service and from society at large, most people – and particularly veterans – want to do the right thing and will respond positively and productively if given a helping hand.

BVSJ is committed to helping newly released veterans make a smooth transition from active duty to civilian life. The staff provides support to military personnel, veterans and families dealing with issues that include social readjustment, finding housing and employment, applying for disability compensation, access to substance abuse and mental health treatment, medical services, family intervention, prison counseling and reentry into the community, and legal advocacy.

Since 1999, the organization's HVRP program has come along way from its one-room office and single phone line and computer. All this changed with the creation of the new Veterans Resource Center, funded in part by the HVRP grant. Each staff member now has a fully equipped office, and the department has its own fax machine, copier and email address. A professionally printed brochure details the center's employment assistance program, and available services are listed on the BVSJ website. These additional resources have allowed the organization to increase the quality and quantity of services provided to homeless veterans in the New York City area. BVSJ has been receiving

funding since 1999, and received \$250,000 for its HVRP program from 2002 to 2004. For the last three years, the center has received \$295,000.

The success of the HVRP program is the in-depth assessment that is done for each of the clients who requests assistance. The staff prides itself on the accuracy and thoroughness of each assessment. By evaluating the client's specific needs, a comprehensive and holistic plan can be created to address them.

The assessment consists of a face-to-face interview with a staff member, and answering 70 detailed questions. Some of the focus areas included in the assessment are social history, educational and vocational training, employment history, military history, housing history, financial history, medical history, psychiatric history, family status, substance abuse, history of high-risk behavior and criminal activity. Once the information is obtained, the staff is able to determine the client's strengths, skills, interests, barriers to employment, and need for various supportive services. Then the client and staff develop an action plan that should result in steady, gainful employment and permanent housing.

BVSJ believes its success depends on how well staff members work with their clients. Service providers must fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of each client in order to create an action plan that identifies realistic goals and makes success possible. With this approach, they are able to restore hope in their clients, making them believe they can overcome the challenges they face.

Specific services provided by Black Veterans for Social Justice include:

- Comprehensive assessment
- In-house employment workshops and job readiness training
- Transportation assistance
- Job search assistance and referrals
- Resume preparation
- In-house General Equivalency Diploma (GED) program.
- In-house workshops facilitated by other social service providers and community-based organizations
- Food pantry program
- Referrals to substance abuse programs (outpatient and inpatient services), legal services, vocational programs, clothing distribution centers, Medicare and Medicaid benefits and job training programs.
- Permanent and transitional housing
- Support groups for PTSD and stress management
- Assistance with military discharge upgrades, and VA claims for compensation, pensions and other benefits.
- Hospital visits and other outreach activities
- On-site intensive and supportive case management.

In order to broaden the services available to its clients, BVSJ collaborates with other local nonprofits, government agencies, foundations and civic organizations. The

collaborations are established and maintained through site visits, emails, daily telephone contacts, open house meetings, and memorandums of understanding. In order to better serve clients, many of these collaborators have negotiated preferences for their veteran clients and have outlined a specific referral system for homeless veteran clients to access their services. Black Veterans for Social Justice works in partnership with the following agencies to provide a broad spectrum of services to its clients:

- NY Harbor Healthcare System, including the VA Hospitals in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens
- The Bronx VA Medical Center
- The Harlem Vet Center
- New York State Department of Labor
- TEC/Brooklyn Training and Employment Council of Brooklyn
- Brooklyn Workforce Innovations
- Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities
- Goodwill Industries of Greater New York
- Burns/Securities Security
- Department of Consumer Affairs
- Salvation Army Veterans Shelter
- Montrose VA Medical Center (Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Center)
- Help-Bronx Employment Center
- The Osborne Society
- Fortune Society
- South Forty Employment and Training Services
- Center for Employment Opportunities
- The Doe Fund Inc. (Ready, Willing and Able)
- St Vincent's Services

By collaborating with these organizations, BVSJ is able to provide access to resources their clients need. One of the main benefits of these collaborations is increasing the employment and training opportunities available to clients. They are able to receive training in the areas of security, cable installation, obtaining a commercial drivers license and computer skills, and then use the connections the HVRP program has developed to find steady employment utilizing their new skills.

Through its agreements with various employers in New York, BVSJ can virtually assure its program participants that they will earn their way into jobs with the potential for livable wages and advancement. The program goal is self-sufficiency and restored self esteem. This arrangement offers benefits for Black Veterans for Social Justice, area employers and formerly homeless veterans. The collaboration remains strong, and clients are able to advance in their programs knowing they will be able to use the skills they have acquired for the job.

<b>BVSJ HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	187	192	103%
Assessments	300	291	97%
Employment Placement	131	128	98%
Permanent housing placement	54	57	106%
Average wage at job placement	\$9.25	\$10.45	113%

During the FY 2006 grant year, Black Veterans for Social Justice enrolled 192 veterans in their HVRP program and were able to find 57 of those clients permanent housing. The average wage at job placement was \$10.45 an hour, and the staff came within 2 percentage points of 100% of its employment goal – a phenomenal record in the New York metropolitan area, but even more remarkable considering the personal challenges their clients face. The organization performs follow-up counseling with its clients on both a 90 and 180 day schedule.

■ For information about the Black Veterans for Social Justice HVRP program, go to: <http://www.bvsj.org>.

■ For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Salvation Army Rochester HVRP Program Won't Let Veterans Fail**

For many years, The Salvation Army and the Department of Veterans Affairs – through the Canandaigua VA Medical Center and the VA Rochester Outplacement Clinic – have worked with several public and private agencies to coordinate a continuum of care with supportive services tailored for homeless veterans. Under a program called Project ReDirect, homeless veterans in central New York are provided with the vital services they need to regain their place in society as productive citizens, including employment preparation and job placement assistance.

The program began in October 1997, and \$142,385 in funding through the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP) greatly enhanced the organization's program success in July 2001. In July 2003, a second grant of \$163,437 was awarded by DOL-VETS. The Salvation Army-Rochester HVRP program was recently awarded a \$174,900 grant for Program Year 2007 to continue its work.

The HVRP program has helped opened the door to a host of collaboration opportunities with a broad range of public and private health and human service providers, and has resulted in increased funding for the organization's homeless assistance programs. For example, the Salvation Army obtained Department of Labor Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) funding in 2002 for a job training and employment program to help veterans transition from incarceration, and now provides routine outreach to veterans at the Monroe County Jail and a New York state prison. Staff say HVRP funding was instrumental in the creation of seven additional transitional housing beds in 2003, and helped in the Salvation Army's bid to purchase two new vans through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem program.

The Salvation Army HVRP program provides outreach, pre-enrollment services, client assessments, employment development training, core training activities, job placement assistance, follow-up counseling and ongoing supportive services to all homeless people. In addition, the HVRP program provides the following support to its homeless veteran clients:

- A three-month, intensive employment preparation training (EPT) program in a classroom setting, which reorients participants to the workforce by developing and refining general readiness skills. The multi-discipline, long-term training gives the veteran the opportunity to address in-depth personal barriers to successful employment. The program helps the veteran develop critical skills such as punctuality, dependability, dressing appropriately, leaving personal problems at home, willingness to take direction and getting along with co-workers.
- Comprehensive, continuous supportive services which are critical in helping homeless veterans enter the workforce, maintain employment, and forge stability in their lives. The extensive network of the Salvation Army, the VA and other community agencies offers services to support the whole person – emotionally,

physically and economically. The “wraparound” supportive services provide veterans with free daily lunches at the Salvation Army’s cafeteria, free work clothing, and essential items like calculators, dictionaries and alarm clocks. Other available services include rent and mortgage assistance, other housing programs, health services and substance abuse counseling.

- Other employment-related services include money for clothing, business attire, medical and dental assistance, transportation, fees for licensing tests, driver’s license, personal hygiene items, laundry supplies and haircuts.

The HVRP program has been able to expand available services through collaboration with several public and private health and human services providers, including:

- VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York (VISN2)
- New York State Department of Labor
- New York State Division of Veterans Affairs
- Rochester Works! One Stop Career Center
- Veterans Outreach Center
- Unity Health Systems.

Several factors contribute to the overall success of the Salvation Army HVRP program. The connection to the national organization’s large infrastructure and ability to leverage community resources has allowed it to improve and expand its programs. Homeless veterans enrolled in the program can take advantage of job training and employment placement services, and a wide variety of other free services offered onsite at the Salvation Army’s downtown Rochester campus. These services include food, clothing, prescription assistance, emergency and transitional shelter in one of four homeless adult residences, medical and mental health services at a Unity Health System clinic, GED preparation and self-directed classes, software assisted Adult Basic Education courses, and tutoring.

Through the companion program Project ReDirect, the Salvation Army is able to provide long-term follow-up and supportive case management to HVRP participants for up to four years. Since the Salvation Army is a faith-based organization, clients are able to participate in a worship community if they wish, and receive regular spiritual counseling.

During last year, the HVRP program exceeded its targeted goals despite the poor economy. Clients were able to obtain employment in diverse job areas due to the coordination of numerous community partners.

The Salvation Army feels that the benefits derived from close collaboration with many organizations representing diverse disciplines and strengths cannot be overemphasized. The HVRP program is considered a “one-stop-shop” for veteran support services. Within the Salvation Army’s downtown facility, HVRP clients are offered a safe haven at the Booth Haven Men’s and Hope House Women’s shelters. Each veteran is assigned a case manager who works with a team of stakeholders to help veterans find stability through securing permanent, and in many cases, subsidized housing. Veterans benefit from the

services of a mental/chemical dependency counselor who is on staff and available any time the need arises. In addition, all veterans are assigned a case manager/outreach worker who is also a veteran. Various support groups are available for residents, one of which is a veteran support group co-facilitated by a veteran peer. Clients are assigned to a job developer who helps them secure employment.

The program helps veterans retain employment with follow-up support for a minimum of 270 days after their placement. The HVRP program offers support services to participants for up to four years, allowing them to re-enroll in the HVRP program if they experience difficulties once they have entered the workforce. If a veteran needs services the Salvation Army does not offer, he or she is referred to an outreach center or other community-based organization for those services.

The Salvation Army Rochester Area Services provides a holistic approach to serving homeless Veterans in the Rochester Area through an expansive collaborative network. Veterans are able to get the services they need free of charge and begin their progress toward a new life.

<b>Salvation Army – Rochester HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	200	426	213%
Program Enrollments	150	200	133%
Employment Placements	110	171	155%
Average hourly wage @ placement	8075	9.17	105%
Placed in permanent housing	50	99	198%
Employment After 90 Days	94	104	111%

- For more information about the Salvation Army Rochester HVRP program, send email to: [bhadden@salvationary-rochasny.org](mailto:bhadden@salvationary-rochasny.org).
- For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Saratoga Rural Preservation Company Designs IMS to Enhance HVRP Services**

Several years ago, the Saratoga County Rural Preservation Company (SCRPC) of Ballston Spa, NY, determined that homeless veterans in the central New York area faced unique challenges when trying to gain employment. To address the problem, SCRPC applied to the Department of Labor (DOL) for funding under the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project in 2000. SCRPC was awarded \$115,000 and began its work in September of that year. The program has been renewed for the same amount each year since.

HVRP is dedicated to helping homeless veterans who are frequently unable to access traditional employment services obtain the vital assistance they need to re-enter the workforce. These individuals frequently face special challenges such as legal issues, mental and physical health challenges and drug addiction. The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project (HVRP) is funded under the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), in compliance with the requirements of 38 United States Code, Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Section 2021 requires the Secretary of Labor to conduct, directly or through grant or contract, such programs as the Secretary determines appropriate to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force. HVRP is the only national employment program that specifically targets homeless veterans. While some HVRP programs have been in existence for several years, providers must reapply as a first-year program every three years, and must request renewal in the other two.

The SCRPC employment assistance program offers services for all veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, have been honorably discharged from the military, and who have been free of alcohol or drug abuse for at least 30 days. The program covers several counties in the state of New York, including Saratoga, Washington, Warren, Albany, Schenectady and Essex.

Each SCRPC client receives a wide range of services, including:

- A complete in-take interview to determine enrollment eligibility
- A needs evaluation that includes clothing, food, medical attention and housing
- A consulting session involving the job market conditions, "selling oneself," dealing with liabilities, cover letter development and conducting a job search campaign
- Database management of case information
- Job leads
- Job search follow-up and evaluation, along with continued assistance needs

Veterans served by the program are asked to stay in touch with SCRPC to provide on-going information about their well-being.

The program has experienced continued growth since its creation. The SCRPC program has been very successful, with approximately 80 percent of its program clients fully completing their work campaigns and moving on to experience substantial personal and professional growth.

One major requirement for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities they serve. This includes communicating the availability of services being provided and collaborating with other organizations to maximize the assistance received by the client. SCRPC staff members have increased community awareness efforts and have increased agency participation in community activities. SCRPC works in collaboration with several entities to ensure client success, including:

- New York State Department of Labor
- New York State Division of Veterans Affairs
- Saratoga County Employment and Training
- Saratoga, Warren and Washington County Veterans Service Agencies
- Shelter of Saratoga (SOS)
- Vet House of Glens Falls
- EOC Saratoga
- Seven area food banks and soup kitchens
- New York State Probation Department

SCRPC, through these community connections, has integrated several services into a “one-stop shop” approach. Clients are able to maximize their success by accessing the full continuum of local services in one location. This innovative service approach is unusual in rural and suburban areas, where residents in need typically encounter limited services spread out over a wide area coupled with transportation difficulties and a lack of holistic case management. Clients in these areas frequently do not successfully access or even know about all of the services for which they are eligible. In contrast to that service model, SCRPC offers, in addition to the HVRP program, the following services in one convenient location:

- Transitional housing for homeless veterans
- Permanent housing for veterans and their families
- Permanent housing for chronically ill veterans and their families
- 364 units of Section 8 housing
- An affordable home mortgage program
- A food pantry
- A Department of Labor employment assistance program

As the HVRP program grew, an increased amount of time was being spent on administrative functions. This began to limit the time available to serve clients and to coordinate services with Department of Labor Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans’ Employment Representative (LVER) specialists. This

challenge led to the development of an innovative computerized reporting system that helps SCPRC maintain the necessary administrative controls to satisfy reporting obligations while freeing workers to attend to client needs.

The system allows the department to produce accurate monthly, quarterly and annual reports on time and within acceptable guidelines. Instructions and calculations were built into the system to ensure reporting accuracy. It produces reports on standard information such as assessments, enrollments, placement and employment activities. It also ensures accountability to the clients by providing alerts needed to ensure completion of 30, 90, 180, and 270-day follow-up requirements.

The information management system program was written by SCRPC employment specialist Art Clark, who will make it available to other grantees. He said he will perform any program customizing required by the receiving organization, and it can be modified for incorporation into most data systems.

The Department of Labor requires grant recipients to set and meet measurements of success. SCRPC had the following outcomes:

<b>Saratoga County HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	42	56	133%
Assessments	58	57	98%
Employment Placement	33	45	136%
Permanent housing placement	32	30	94%
Average wage at job placement	\$10.50	\$13.94	133%

Since 2000 SCRPC has provided vital employment services to homeless veterans. It has developed a modernized reporting system that maximizes service delivery and minimizes time filling out paperwork. It has also successfully led collaboration and outreach efforts among local human service providers to create and expand a holistic, one-stop service in a non-urban environment. All of these innovative efforts could be replicated in other non-rural areas, which makes the Saratoga County Rural Preservation Council a HVRP national best practice.

- For information about the SCRPC HVRP program, call 518-885-0091.
- For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/>.

## **Veterans Outreach Center Ensures HVRP Success Through Networking With Employers, Agencies**

The Veterans Outreach Center (VOC) in Rochester, NY, is the nation's oldest community-based outreach and advocacy center for veterans and their family members. The center has served more than 34,000 veteran clients in upstate New York since opening in 1973. VOC offers transitional housing, mental health services, educational and vocational training programs, and other supportive services for veterans and their families, and provides referrals to community resources for substance abuse treatment, domestic violence issues, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), parenting skills and other personal development and empowerment programs.

VOC occupies six buildings on two campuses in Rochester, a city in Monroe County. The population of the city and county is nearly one million people. The center is strategically located within walking distance of the downtown area, and within blocks of 10 nonprofit community-based service providers that work in partnership to serve the homeless veterans of the city of Rochester and Monroe, Livingston, Orleans, Wayne and Ontario counties. It is estimated more than 5,900 unemployed veterans – many of them homeless – live in the region served by the center.

Throughout its history, VOC has recognized the need for employment services and job placement assistance to ensure homeless veterans can successfully re-enter society as productive, self-supporting citizens. In April 2000, VOC received its first Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP) grant from the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). That \$134,996 grant allowed VOC to further develop its employment assistance program – particularly its supportive services for veterans with significant barriers to employment – and immediately build a regional network of public and private service providers to provide employment opportunities for its homeless veteran clients.

The core of the VOC program is its outreach and case management initiatives. Three outreach specialists work days and evening to identify homeless veterans who need help. An initial list of more than 75 locations is used to identify sites to be visited on a regular, weekly basis, including homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, VA medical facilities, church programs, county social service agencies, soup kitchens and places where homeless people are known to gather.

The outreach program also embraces organizations and agencies that can help VOC in its work: The Salvation Army, Volunteers of America, Catholic Family Center, Family Services of Rochester, St. Joseph's House and St. Francis Center, among others. These organizations become accustomed to the routine visits and information sharing, and benefit from the VOC outreach emergency cell phone number to refer homeless and at-risk veterans to the HVRP program at any time, round the clock. According to DOL officials, VOC's evening service hours devoted to outreach, case management, training and employment assistance is rare.

Social workers stationed at the VOC are an integral part of this initiative. They include representatives of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) who can provide immediate help with applications for benefits. According to senior staff, the success of the HVRP program “from the beginning had much to do with the system set up in the first two weeks of the program – to identify target populations, programs and agencies; develop a rotating schedule of visitations; establish a solid rapport with staff at those locations; and solidify the linkages through memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and letters.”

Two of the first outreach workers were once homeless veterans. In 2001, women were added to the social worker staff, reflecting the need to provide more specialized services for the fastest growing segment of the nation’s homeless veteran population.

Case management is divided into three categories. Clinical case managers focus on chemical dependency and mental health issues. A full-time professional clinician provides individual and family counseling for clients coping with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Persian Gulf illnesses. Residential case managers work in the VOC emergency and transitional housing programs. Vocational case managers deal with barriers to employment other than clinical issues, such as food, clothing, transportation and other needs.

Employment specialists are assigned to focus primarily on job development. One works with HVRP clients; one with the general, non-homeless veteran population; and one with clients working to overcome serious barriers to employment, such as disabilities, legal problems and the need for intensive social services support.

The Resource Center is the one-stop career development and vocational training facility of the VOC. The center is the “launching pad” for the employment assistance program, providing counseling, case management, housing assistance and a full range of services and training. The center is a collaborative base of operations for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs outreach staff and New York State Division of Veterans Affairs full-time benefits counselors. A DOL-VETS Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) counselor provides on-site employment services.

The Resource Center also features a Veterans Community Technology Center (state-of-the-art computer center for skills training) and Quartermaster’s Club, which provides professional work clothing for the job-ready veteran.

VOC’s employment services program features several unique initiatives that warrant special mention. The VETNET program is a weekly group networking session that brings VOC staff, area employers and veteran job seekers together to share information and foster the development of employment opportunities. The PROGRO initiative provides additional, more specialized training so veterans can advance in their careers. The HVRP “On-the-Job” Training project places clients in two- to four-week subsidized training opportunities in local businesses to help them develop basic job skills and personal responsibility.

Another program of notable merit is the Veterans Alternatives to Incarceration Program (VATIP). Organized in 2000 to reduce criminal behavior and re-arrest rates, VATIP is supported by government agencies and private foundations. VOC case managers work with attorneys, judges and public defenders in state, county and city courts to link veterans with drug treatment programs. To remain in the program, participants must achieve one year of sobriety, earn at least a high school or equivalency diploma, and obtain and maintain steady, gainful employment.

<b>Veterans Outreach Center HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	150	135	90%
Assessments	225	246	109%
Employment Placement	105	95	90%
Permanent housing placement	105	113	108%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.75	\$10.13	116%

The collaborative network that supports and helps ensure the success of the VOC HVRP program includes:

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Outreach worker assigned to VOC; teams with VOC staff; links VOC clients to VA hospital, domiciliary and outpatient services.
- New York State Division of Veterans Affairs – Two full-time staff persons assigned to VOC for benefits counseling and claims assistance.
- New York State Department of Labor – Provides on-site DVOP to case manage and job develop with VOC staff. DVOP counselor is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans’ Employment and Training Service.
- Salvation Army-Rochester: HVRP grantee – shares training, counseling and work resources.
- Science linkages in the Community/Micrecycle – Provides material assistance and consultants to facilitate veterans’ computer training.
- Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 20 – In addition to financial support, provides employment opportunities in its retail thrift store for VOC clients. Also partners with VOC to operate the Welcome Home Program (“Hand-up” to veterans returning from overseas duties).
- Procurement Technical Assistance Center – Identifies and links VOC clients with vet-owned business and companies with defense contracts.
- Unified Court System-7<sup>th</sup> District – Drug court referrals for VATIP program.
- Veterans Interfaith Clergy Advisory of Rochester (VICAR) – Provides outreach support, referrals and meets monthly at the VOC as an advisory group to the VOC’s homeless programs.
- LIFESPAN – Area’s elderly worker specialists and U.S. DOL older worker grantee. Provides training, employment, financial management, protection to

- abused elderly, ombudsman program and more. Provides services to VOC's veterans over 55 (provides subsidized training worksites for vets not ready for employment). Also serves women veterans in its Women in Transition program.
- Job Development Network – Organization of 30 government and non-profit employment providers that networks to identify job opportunities for hard-to-place clients. Meets monthly at the VOC.

### **Key Strategies and Recommendations**

Outreach – Start building collaborations with other community providers quickly and don't leave any important linkages out. Better to have too many than not enough. Maintain constant contact with them – develop a schedule of phone contacts and regular visitations; implement them as soon as possible. Obtain commitments (MOU's), detailing precisely what each party will do for the other. Use the media as much as possible to help market the program and network with reporters and PR contacts – free coverage is available for those willing to work a little to earn it (assertive salesmanship).

Case Management – Don't get bogged down trying to do everything and provide services that someone else can do better and quicker. Utilize all of the linkages available and promote teamwork in the process.

Employment – Total quality management ... everyone is a customer. Employer involvement as a customer and provider is important. Market the program aggressively to the employer and utilize employers in all aspects of the process – recruitment, skills assessment, training, mentoring, networking and focus groups. Host a community Veterans Job Fair, open houses for employers (letting clients market themselves).

Public municipal and military facilities are often free and cost effective for such events (VOC spends between \$79 and \$950 each on Job Fairs and Stand Downs, utilizing many volunteers and donations, primarily from veteran organizations). Newsletters to employers that highlight clients' objectives, skills and experience work well, not only to match clients with employers, but to market the program in general. They also are a good motivational tool for clients who find it encouraging to see such wide dissemination of information and use the newsletters while networking at recruitment events.

Training – Many inexpensive and free resources are available in communities to promote computer tech education. Use them to the max and build training partners to insure the longevity and financial stability of your training programs. Start a reserve of volunteers to augment your training programs – it's much easier to get volunteers for training than for fund raising or watching phones!

Housing – Housing is so important for a homeless employment program that any grantee that can afford it should dedicate at least a part-time individual to developing good working relationships with landlords and other housing providers. Help with other things – furnishings, utilities, security deposits, etc. – takes much burden off the minds of clients (and often staff). As a back-up, the housing staff person should develop a back-up list of housing availability and resources to help find housing, to be shared with the whole staff

and kept updated. As in Rochester, several agencies can work together on developing a list and share it regularly.

■ For more information about the Veterans Outreach Center, go to: [www.veteransoutreachcenter.org](http://www.veteransoutreachcenter.org).

■ For Information on HVRP, see <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry Veterans Homeless Employment and Life Program**

Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry Inc. (ABCCM), in Asheville, NC, operates the Veterans Homeless Employment and Life Program (VHELP), which owes much of its success to funding under the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP).

A faith-based organization, ABCCM brings unique characteristics to the services it provides. With 246 congregations representing all faith groups within the community, and more than 3,000 volunteers, ABCCM has a strong base of community support and activism that includes veterans service organizations (VSOs), service providers, church organizations, and employers throughout the region.

The ABCCM Men's Shelter has a total budget of \$792,200, of which \$198,000 is received from the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) through the HVRP program.

Authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access employment training and placement assistance. It is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans. Service providers receiving grants must reapply as a first-year program every three years. The HVRP grant program is extremely competitive; fewer than half the organizations that apply for the program receive funding.

ABCCM first received HVRP funds in 2002, when they received a grant for \$138,000. That level remained unchanged following year, but in 2004 the award was increased to \$198,200, its current funding level. Another \$460,000 is provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program; \$19,900 is raised through special events; donations bring in about \$95,000; and state grants account for about \$18,800 each year.

Sam Everett, Program Director of ABCCM's "A Vet's Place," said, "Beginning in 1969, our purpose has been to reach out to the total person, providing assistance regardless of race, sex, creed or status. We accomplish this through four ministries." The four ministries are Crisis Ministry, Jail Ministry, Shelter Ministry, and Medical Ministry.

The Crisis Ministry, at four different locations, provides counseling, food, clothing, furniture and other household items, financial assistance for rent or mortgage assistance, utilities, heat, prescriptions and transportation. The Jail Ministry operates a comprehensive program in the local jail which includes visitation, education, library services, counseling, and coordination of religious activities. Two shelters comprise the Shelter Ministry; the Men's Shelter offers 60 beds, 48 of which are designated for veterans. The Women and Children's Shelter provides emergency shelter for up to 27 single women and up to seven families for a total capacity of 43.

Acute care services are provided by the Medical Ministry, which serves up to 30 patients per night. It also offers prescriptions and medical supplies, referrals and follow-up to the primary health care network, and preventative education. There is also a dental clinic two nights each week.

“ABCCM ‘A Vet’s Place’ services are under this umbrella organization,” said Everett. “Once veterans achieve independent living status, we maintain a strong safety net with them through these ministries. For instance, they are eligible for Crisis Ministry services such as clothing, furniture and household items. Or, the free clinic can supplement VA services or provide medical, dental and pharmacy for those veterans who do not qualify for VA medical services.”

Clients can receive services such as needs assessments and referrals to ABCCM programs or other assistance providers; document requests are handled by the organization, such as applying for replacement social security cards, identification cards, birth certificates, and discharge records (DD 214’s). While participating in the HVRP program, clients are entitled to:

- Help applying for educational and employment histories
- Resume preparation
- Employment leads
- Job interview training and practice sessions
- Transportation assistance, a vital resource is the region
- Haircuts, work tools, work clothes and shoes
- Personal financial management counseling, saving and budgeting information
- Job retention support
- Continuing education opportunities such as career assessments, community college courses, and tuition assistance and book fees

The first year of HVRP funding at ABCCM was 2002, and since this time the program has changed and improved to maximize effectiveness in serving homeless veterans. “The coverage area for services has been expanded and another case manager has been added, which, in turn, allows more services to be provided to more veterans in more locations,” said Everett.

“In addition, HVRP and other veteran service providers have worked diligently to raise public awareness about homeless veterans. In July 2006, ABCCM, in partnership with the Asheville Tourist Baseball Club, sponsored a Veterans Appreciation Day in which an HVRP participant was the main speaker.”

HVRP clients also participate in a variety of fundraising events for ABCCM as a service to the community. Veterans in the program have been invited as speakers for youth groups and regularly serve as members of community advisory boards with the Department of Social Services, the National Homeless Coalition, and ABCCM’s “A Vet’s Place” Veterans at ABCCM also started one of the first American Legion posts in a veteran transitional living facility, which is run entirely by homeless veterans.

ABCCM is a part of the Homeless Continuum of Care as well as the Veteran's Continuum of Care Services. Everett provides leadership for both of these groups, which includes the participation of about 25 organizations throughout the region. These organizations are also involved with the county Comprehensive Housing Assistance Plan (CHAP), and the state's CoC and CHAP. "This network of support is the foundation of our work with veterans, and is also linked with about 60 other agencies providing comprehensive health and human services around the community," said Everett.

Outlining the service delivery process, Everett said, "Based on the veteran's initial assessment, the HVRP employment specialists will make the appropriate referral to the proper agencies. For example, if the veteran has not applied for VA medical services, the HVRP specialist can either refer the client to the VA medical center (VAMC) to apply, or have the applications on hand and help veterans complete the forms. Access to VAMC services provides veteran clients with physical and mental health care, substance abuse treatment, dental and vision care, and veterans service officers to help clients file for VA benefits."

Additionally, clients can be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation, NC Employment Security Commission, Joblink, Asheville-Buncombe Community Technical College, and Goodwill Industries to provide them with services including job readiness training, occupational and vocational skills training, and job referrals. If clients are 20% or more service-connected disabled, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation can provide assistance in obtaining an advanced degree. The Social Security Administration can help veterans to replace lost cards, and also in applying for non-service connected benefits.

After referrals are made and a plan of action developed for each veteran client, HVRP specialists keep track of their progress through direct communication, whether by phone, email, or face-to-face meetings. Records of these outreach and follow-up visits become part of each client's case file.

"Our goal is to work with participants so they can successfully deal with obstacles to employment and establish a history of satisfactory problem solving which will serve them in the future. We utilize a harm reduction model that focuses on intense case management. We build on small successes to achieve greater success. We utilize positive reinforcement and encouragement," said Everett.

Developing a base of volunteers from churches and veterans service organizations to act as mentors for veterans in the program is an important strategy, and ABCCM also uses volunteers and agencies to provide job training and other supportive services.

In creating a strong network of potential employers, ABCCM maintains a pool of human resources managers that provide employment opportunities as well as advise veterans on possibilities for career growth and professional development. These managers have a variety of expertise, as well as connections through their faith communities or veterans

service organizations, and have experience working with HVRP clients and knowledge of the program.

“These core elements form a framework that gives our staff and organization multiple ways for the veteran to be successful,” said Everett. “It also gives us multiple approaches so that we are not pinning our program goals and objectives to staff competencies, organizational competencies or community capacity. We believe this comprehensive approach gives veterans second and third chances, as well as second and third choices, about how to recapture a sense of identity, esteem and value as a responsible member of society.”

ABCCM is fortunate to be located in a community that is active in supporting and embracing veterans, adopting the slogan “Welcome Home!” The entire community is involved in making sure homeless veterans are in fact, welcomed home.

<b>ABCCM ‘A Vet’s Place’ HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	200	426	213%
Program Enrollments	150	200	133%
Employment Placements	110	171	155%
Average hourly wage @ placement	8.75	917	105%
Placed in permanent housing	50	99	195%
Employment After 90 Days	94	104	111%

■ For more information about the Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministry, go to: [www.abccm.org](http://www.abccm.org).

■ For Information on HVRP, see <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries – Cincinnati Serving Veterans in Cincinnati and Rural Counties**

Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries, located in Cincinnati, reaches out to veterans in shelters and on the street in the greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky areas, as well as Adams, Brown and Clermont counties in rural Ohio. With a goal of “reaching out to those who are the most difficult to serve,” the organization’s focus is on the chronically homeless, veterans who have been convicted on felony charges, and those who are disabled with substance abuse issues.

It is a daunting challenge, and that client base is certainly not one most organizations would select if their performance rating – indeed their eligibility for federal grants – depends on successful housing and employment placements. Yet, Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries (OVGI) has been so successful in its mission that its employment assistance program is widely regarded as one of the best in the nation.

OVGI representatives go out on the street, to regional drop-in centers, and to churches that serve meals to the homeless seeking veterans who need help. Once they are found, these veterans are referred to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or to Goodwill’s Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP).

Ohio Valley Goodwill received its first HVRP grant in 1993 at the level of \$200,000. Under the grant, OVGI agreed to provide employment preparation and job placement services to Cincinnati’s homeless veterans. The growth and success of that program, as well as its extension into both urban and rural areas in southern Ohio and northern Kentucky, has been rewarded with an increase in HVRP funding to \$575,000 under two separate grants.

Authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access employment training and placement assistance. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), and is the only national employment program that specifically targets homeless veterans. The HVRP grant program is extremely competitive; fewer than half the organizations that apply for the program receive funding.

With the increases in funding, OVGI has been able to further develop its commendable network of community services partners and dramatically broaden its assistance portfolio. With increased funding, the organization now operates a full-service, one-stop facility offering the full spectrum of care to veterans in crises:

- Emergency services, including intake assessments and referrals to health service providers, including the Cincinnati VA Medical Center, on an immediate access basis
- Transitional services such as food, clothing, and housing

- Employment preparation and job placement services
- Educational, vocational and rehabilitative training opportunities
- VA benefits counseling and assistance with applications
- Referrals to permanent housing
- Assistance with applying for mainstream assistance programs such as SSI/SSDI, food stamps, and local aid programs
- Case management and follow-up services

Developing a strong network of employers who have faith and trust in the program's participants is the key requisite for the success of any HVRP program, and Ohio Valley Goodwill has developed relationships with an appreciable list of employers who are willing to give veterans working to overcome serious and oftentimes multiple barriers to employment a second chance. This is one of the core values of OVGI, and one of the distinguishing characteristics of this program.

A key strategy utilized in identifying employment opportunities is constantly monitoring where jobs are available around town, and learning which of those companies and businesses will or will not hire program clients. That advance research and contact with prospective employers ensures both the integrity and efficiency of the program.

“We place our vets with a wide variety of companies, and that variety is always changing,” said John Briggs, Veterans and Community Liaison for OVGI, who pointed out that Ohio Valley Goodwill has a strong relationship with the region's manufacturing and shipping industries. He was quick to point out, however, that while other grantees have developed strong relationships with one or two companies, OVGI never stops searching for new opportunities because changes in the economy and in certain businesses are unpredictable.

Briggs said flexibility in employment placements is also necessitated by the divergent backgrounds, skills and experience of program clients. Some veterans have limited education and experience levels that initially restrict their employment opportunities and earnings potential. Others have strong backgrounds and education achievement; some have a record of felony convictions. Location, a company's institutional culture, the future prospects of particular industries, certification and bonding issues, pay scale – all have a significant impact on the suitability of employment prospects for OVGI clients.

Briggs said OVGI's successful job placements region-wide have occurred in the fields of security, customer service, janitorial and maintenance, food service, food production and processing, and the nonprofit sector.

With both HVRP and other funds for training, OVGI has the capacity to provide clients with training and educational opportunities ranging from GED completion to college courses. Briggs stressed that the training provided by the organization is necessarily tied to employment or job advancement. They tend to stay away from a long-term training because “there is a cost to training for the vet, and that cost is the money not earned during that training,” said Briggs. He said once a client is gainfully employed and has his

or her personal life back in order, career counseling is available to encourage veterans to seek additional education to enhance their earnings potential.

Ohio Valley Goodwill does provide training to provide veterans with a basic knowledge of computers, a basic knowledge of the expectations of employers and acceptable standards of self discipline and behavior in the workplace, and basic “life skills” training to increase their employment prospects.

Collaborations with DOL, VA, HUD, SSA, all other service providers in the Cincinnati area, local schools and colleges, veterans service organizations, and a number of local businesses allow Ohio Valley Goodwill to stay informed and connected to the service community on both a local and national level.

Ohio Valley Goodwill has secured HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) funding and uses HVRP funds and services as the required match. They believe that using CoC with a permanent housing emphasis is the best way of adding permanent housing to an HVRP program without having to wait for facilities to be constructed. And they put this theory into action by housing veterans in scattered-site permanent housing. If a veteran is enrolled in the HVRP program, and finds and keeps a job, they will receive housing. This is possible due in part to the affordable cost of living in the Cincinnati region, where a nice one-bedroom apartment can be secured for around \$550 a month. This arrangement allows veterans to secure housing that is convenient to their job.

Ohio Valley Goodwill’s HUD housing programs provide veterans with funds for a deposit and at least 90 days rent, as well as money for furniture in some cases. If a veteran has been in the VA Grant and Per Diem dormitory and saved enough money, however, they do expect the veteran to contribute to his or her living costs at the start.

<b>Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries HVRP – PY 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	127	128	101%
Program Enrollments	127	128	101%
Employment Placements	105	103	98%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$9.20	\$8.68	94%
Placed in permanent housing	114	116	102%
Employment After 90 Days	74	65	88%

■ For more information about Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries, go to: [www.cincinnati goodwill.org/](http://www.cincinnati goodwill.org/).

■ For Information on HVRP, see <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Volunteers of America of Central Ohio HVRP Fueled by Service Delivery Network**

Volunteers of America of Central Ohio (VOA) has been helping families and individuals since 1904. A well established, faith-based community organization, VOA has a successful homeless services program that assists clients in finding and securing housing, employment, connections with health and human service agencies, educational opportunities and access to vocational training programs. When the opportunity arose to expand services to focus on homeless veterans, VOA was up to the task.

In 2003, VOA applied for and received a grant from the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) through its Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP). HVRP is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access vital employment assistance in order to re-enter the workforce. These individuals frequently face special challenges including legal issues, mental and physical disabilities and substance abuse problems. HVRP, authorized in 1987 under Section 738 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, and administered by the DOL Veterans Employment and Training Service, is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans.

Each organization or agency receiving HVRP grant funding is required to administer a program that includes collaboration with other local mainstream service providers to enhance the services available to its participants. It must also demonstrate that its program is unique, successful and replicable. On those counts, VOA of Central Ohio stands among the national leaders.

No fewer than 14 local emergency and transitional housing organizations and agencies work with VOA staff and their clients, including several faith-based charitable organizations, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, Ohio Coalition for the Homeless and the Columbus Compact. Some facilities provide therapeutic recovery programs, some focus on women and single-parent families. Some programs offer permanent supportive housing for people with disabilities.

Recognizing that many homeless people – regardless of veteran status – are impacted by mental illness, disabilities and substance abuse problems, nearly a dozen partners provide drug and alcohol treatment programs, mental health services, general health care and rehabilitative programs, either in concert with local VA facilities or independently.

Employment and educational services are provided by a strong coalition of government agencies and community-based service providers. The HVRP grant and focus on veteran-specific challenges actually strengthened an already enviable regional network. VOA of Central Ohio has forged a commendable alliance that includes:

- Columbus VA Medical Center Health Care for the Homeless Program
- VA Veterans Business Administration
- Ohio Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation

- Franklinton Job Shop
- Gladden Community House (program referrals and job fairs)
- Central Ohio Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Literacy Council
- First Source (Franklin County, employment by companies receiving tax credits for employing veterans)
- Central Ohio Transit Authority (discounted bus passes)
- Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services
- Communities in Schools (literacy, GED, other educational programs)
- Department of Labor Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) specialists.

<b>VOA of Central Ohio HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	173	174	101%
Assessments	225	248	110%
Employment Placement	113	101	89%
Permanent housing placement	145	126	87%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.50	\$9.44	111%

*\* There are number of HVRP participants who are currently involved in either alcohol and drug treatment programs that require residency in their facilities. These HVRP participants will not transition into permanent housing until they complete those programs.*

Through its Career Academy, VOA of Central Ohio offers homeless veterans an interactive adult learning model that centers on job readiness training and requires client participation in career planning and identifying personal employment goals. The employment preparation process begins with the development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that takes into consideration special needs – such as life skills training, cultural diversity and conflict resolution, behavioral modification that includes professional and business etiquette, and learning job retention skills.

Classroom sessions include resume preparation, job search techniques and resources, computer training, developing interview skills, introduction to the Internet, filing online job applications, and business writing. Program managers help veterans throughout the process, from enrollment to follow-up meetings. Clients will spend an average of six weeks in the academy, although the length of time and courses the veteran needs will depend on his or her IEP.

The program further empowers the homeless veteran job seeker by providing free email service; access to computers, fax machines and telephones; transportation to job fairs and interviews in the greater Columbus community; discount public transportation passes; assistance with child care issues; referrals to select clothing retailers that honor vouchers

or offer discounts to program participants; food coupons; and an alumni club that provides peer support and fellowship.

The addition of two HVRP Outreach Specialists to the VOA of Central Ohio staff allowed the program to exceed program goals for FY 2003 in total number of assessments, enrollments and employment placements. The program received a \$300,000 HVRP grant for Program Year 2007. Specialists travel throughout the central Ohio region to locate homeless veterans, establish a rapport with them, and welcome them into the program. Staff also visit area homeless service providers and employers to teach them about the HVRP program and the benefits of collaboration with the program. Developing and maintaining open, honest communication with the region's employers is a critical part of the employment program, both for assessment of participating veterans and for cultivating job placement opportunities.

The HVRP program is an integral part of a homeless services network that utilizes several of the operating divisions of VOA of Central Ohio. Veterans receive assistance through Family Services, Men's Services, and the Educational and Vocational Services divisions, and may participate in social activities and supportive programs at the Logan and Dayton community centers. The organization reaches out to serve the homeless in both urban and rural areas, and depends heavily on the commitment of staff to overcome the logistical difficulties such a wide sphere of influence presents.

- For more information about the Volunteers of America of Central Ohio program, call 614-351-1881.
- For information about the Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service programs, go to: [www.dol.gov/vets/](http://www.dol.gov/vets/).

## **Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio – Cleveland Veterans Resource Center**

Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio, an \$18 million dollar organization, has been running a Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) funded at \$300,000 through its Veterans Resource Center since 2001. Located in Cleveland, which has a large population of homeless veterans, VOA of Greater Ohio serves all homeless veterans, but the largest segment of this population are African-American males between 45 and 55 years old.

Providing as many services on-site as possible, VOA of Greater Ohio offers complete wrap-around services which include employment assistance, housing, legal information, 12-step meetings, training and access to additional supportive services through their various partners.

Authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access employment training and placement assistance. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), and is the only national employment program that specifically targets homeless veterans. The HVRP grant program is extremely competitive; fewer than half the organizations that apply for the program receive funding.

Started in a space donated by a local church, the program has moved to a facility that houses other programs serving homeless veterans and is now called the Veterans Resource Center. This allows multiple services to be accessible at one place, making the process of serving homeless veterans more efficient and effective.

VOA of Greater Ohio has four VA staff people working on-site at the Veterans Resource Center who are able to assist in providing access to VA medical services. They also send an HVRP case manager to provide employment preparation classes and case management at the Domiciliary at the VA Medical Center in Brecksville one day a week.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) comes to the Veterans Resource Center once a month to host Ohio Transition Assistance Programs (OTAP). There is also an ODJFS Veterans Intensive Services Coordinator at the center to provide guidance and referrals to veterans and their families to a wide range of veteran-specific and mainstream assistance programs.

Legal Aide is a partner organization that provides legal services to veterans. A Legal Aide representative has regularly scheduled visits to the center. Another partner is the Collinwood Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, which provides computer training classes at the Veterans Resource Center.

Other partnerships include the Upward Bound program at Cuyahoga County Community College, business courses through the Small Business Administration, truck driver

training funded by Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, and more specific technical programs through Qwest Technical School.

Dennis Kresack, President and CEO of VOA of Greater Ohio, said, “For the most part, these relationships are established based on mutual agreements to provide services ... Our relationships with the other agencies are based on the mutual desire to meet the needs of homeless veterans.”

Kresack explained the advantages of welcoming partner agencies to provide services on site. “By bringing numerous agencies under one roof, we are able to provide wrap-around services that more effectively meet the needs of homeless veterans. These veterans no longer have to travel all over the city to access services. The services are brought to the veteran and provided on a regular schedule to allow for follow-up, additional referrals and quicker response to veterans’ needs. This is unique due to the multi-jurisdictional entities being located under one roof with the freedom to share information. As veterans enter the program, they are co-enrolled or introduced to representatives from several agencies in the facility.”

Every Tuesday, VOA of Greater Ohio holds open enrollment, where eight to 10 veterans on average are able to gain access to the services offered at the center. Once enrolled, the clients will meet with a case manager who assesses their needs and makes the appropriate referrals. If the veteran is interested in utilizing the Veteran Resource Center’s Grant and Per Diem program – transitional housing and supportive services to allow them to receive medical and mental health care, gain employment, and achieve personal and economic stability – they return on Thursday for the residential interview. Veterans who opt to return and are eligible and ready for HVRP meet with their case manager a second time to develop an employability plan.

“At this point,” said Kresack, “the case manager makes appropriate referrals to outside agencies or services to address the veteran’s issues. For example, we have established a relationship with another local nonprofit, Towards Employment, that has a program geared primarily to the veteran with one or more felonies. We also help veterans address other issues such as child support, suspended licenses, transportation, basic computer literacy, budgeting, and sobriety programs.”

After this, veterans have to keep in contact with their HVRP case manager as they wait for placement in the transitional housing program. The veteran must visit the center to keep the case manager informed about where they are in their employability plan. “Together, they work on developing an effective resume that is appropriate for the type of position that they are seeking. The case manager also discusses with the veteran current labor market information and paints a realistic picture of what the veteran can expect for the type of job they seek and salary, given their current situation,” said Kresack.

VOA of Greater Ohio’s HVRP case managers have established several ways to help veterans find suitable employment opportunities. Internet searches, weekly employment

ads, and established relationships with area employers are all ways that case managers find jobs for clients. Veterans with long-term unemployment are provided with long-term plans for obtaining a job tailored to their particular circumstances, with an expected successful job placement within 18 months. Sometimes that requires starting at a lower position, at lower pay, while working toward advancement. This is discussed with the client and becomes part of his or her employment plan.

“We have established a relationship with the Huntleigh Corporation at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport where veterans can get part-time to three-quarter-time employment. Many of these veterans work for a period of six months before moving on with their job search. Huntleigh fully supports our efforts on behalf of the veteran and allows us to intervene should old behaviors resurface,” Kresack said.

All veterans are also urged to attend the monthly on site OTAP meetings. In doing so, veterans are then enrolled in the state system which introduces them to more employers. Veterans are also enrolled in the state’s Shared Career Opportunities Training Information System, which tracks wage information and provides contact information. A key use for the system is that veterans who drop out of the HVRP program after finding employment are better able to access continued services to help them stay housed and keep their job.

<b>VOA of Greater Ohio HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	225	292	130%
Program Enrollments	173	229	132%
Employment Placements	113	122	108%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$8.50	\$8.91	105%
Placed in permanent housing	145	146	101%
Employment After 90 Days		61	101%

- For more information about the Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio, go to: <http://www.voago.org/Home/tabid/1839/Default.aspx>.
- For information about the Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service programs, go to: [www.dol.gov/vets/](http://www.dol.gov/vets/).

## **Central City Concern A Leader in Experience and Coalition Building**

Central City Concern of Portland, OR, was created as the Burnside Consortium in the 1970s – a coalition to address the problem of alcoholism and substance abuse under a National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA) Public Inebriate grant. Under that funding program, the consortium organized the Homeless Alcohol and Drug Intervention Network (HADIN), through which publicly funded agencies could coordinate services, improve the region’s service delivery system, and track clients’ progress. The network has been meeting every week since 1980.

Central City Concern (CCC) is now a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to provide solutions to homelessness in the Portland and Vancouver, WA, metropolitan areas. With a mission “to provide pathways to self-sufficiency through active intervention in poverty and homelessness,” CCC’s housing, employment services, health care, mental health and substance abuse treatment programs serve more than 12,000 clients each year.

CCC has almost 500 employees and an annual operating budget of more than \$25 million. Its innovative continuum of services is administered by a central office that provides financial and contract services, and is supported by more than 100 funding sources. Actually, more than 3,500 individuals, businesses, corporations, civic groups, churches and private foundations make regular financial contributions to Central City Concern each year.

The organization also has several contracts with federal, state, county and city governments, and has managed many federal grant programs. For the last nine years, CCC has received funds under the Department of Labor-Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP).

The total budget for all of CCC’s veteran assistance programs is more than \$1 million; and CCC has received funding under the DOL-VETS program continuously since April 1998. It is estimated there are about 5,270 homeless veterans in the service area. The organization is therefore dedicated to expanding its services for the homeless veteran subpopulation. The goal of the Homeless Veterans Project is to assist Veterans in their return to mainstream life and self-sufficiency. Connections to support services, housing, medical assistance, mental health counseling and drug and alcohol treatment are provided.

Central City Concern’s HVRP builds on the strength of the agency’s One Stop employment center, its continuum of services and housing, and its collaborations with federal and state agencies, and community-based service providers. Homeless veterans who participate in the HVRP program receive the following services:

- Skills and interest assessment
- Individualized employment planning
- Case management

- Training and workshops on methods of seeking work, resume creation, interview skills, and other pre-employment training support
- Tutorials and classes
- Computer skills training
- Vocational training
- Access to a resource center, including personal voice mail, telephones, computer, printer, Internet, fax and copy machines
- Transportation assistance
- An employment service program developed for ex-offenders
- Employment-related housing programs
- Job development
- Follow-up and retention services that include employer support services

During the last quarter century, Central City Concern has developed a powerful, effective coalition of employment service providers by establishing and strengthening collaborative agreements with:

- Oregon Employment Department – A representative of the OED is out-stationed in CCC offices for 8 hours per day.
- Department of Social and Health Services – Administration of the food stamp program and Oregon Health Plan. DHS provides two full-time employment case workers.
- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation – Provides services to persons with disabilities. Representatives are on-site 4 hours each week and available to see veteran clients.
- Multnomah County Aging and Disabilities – Focuses on needs of aging and disabled persons. A representative is on-site for 3 ½ hours each week.
- Dislocated Worker Program – Provides services to workers who have lost jobs through no fault of their own. A representative is on-site for 3 ½ hours per week.
- AARP – Helps provide employment opportunities for persons 55 years and older. Two AARP work-experience assistants are available in the CCC resource room each day to provide full-time resource assistance.
- Multnomah County Department of Adult Community Justice – Provides assistance to clients who are just returning to the community from incarceration, many of whom are veterans. In addition, HVRP staff visit Multnomah County Jails, the federal prison at Sheridan and other correctional facilities to provide pre-release inmates with information about the services provided by HVRP and the West Portland One Stop.
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – CCC is an active participant in the VA's Community Reintegration Services. HVRP also participates in the CHALENG program.
- Faith-Based Organizations – Coordination of efforts to serve the veteran population. Organizations include the Salvation Army, Union Gospel Mission, Teen Challenge, Portland Rescue Mission and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.
- Mercy Enterprises Inc., a division of Mercy Corps – Provides assistance through Individual Development Accounts and Loan programs to assist veterans interested

in starting their own enterprise. Guidance is offered in the preparation of sound business plans to enhance project success.

In addition, CCC maintains close contact with the Mayor's Office and the City Commissioners of Portland, as well as the office of the Multnomah County Chair, the Mayor's Office of Vancouver, and the County Administrator in Clark County.

<b>Central City Concern HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	217	117	54%
Assessments	278	198	71%
Employment Placement	127	71	56%
Permanent housing placement	165	99	60%
Average wage at job placement	\$9.00	\$11.20	124%

Central City Concern is also the largest employer of formerly homeless individuals in Portland. Of its 400 staff members who work with homeless clients, roughly 75% are in recovery from addiction to drugs or alcohol, and many have experienced homelessness firsthand. This makes case managers more effective in their interaction with clients, and stronger advocates for CCC programs during discussions with area employers, government agencies and service providers.

Collaboration to develop effective, comprehensive employment services for homeless veterans is the prime objective of the HVRP program, and that has long been CCC's strong suit in its campaign to help the homeless of coastal northern Oregon and southern Washington. Program successes in housing and employment placements – across two state and several county jurisdictional boundaries – attest to the value of the Central City Concern HVRP program as a replicable "Best Practice."

■ For more information about the Central City Concern HVRP program, go to: [www.centralcityconcern.org](http://www.centralcityconcern.org).

■ For information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center HVRP Strengthens Extensive Integrated Services Network**

Life on the streets for a homeless veteran is a struggle for survival – a constant battle against hunger, the elements and the threat of violence. It's not unlike the paths many veterans traveled while serving in combat. In Philadelphia, homeless veterans can escape the ravages of homelessness and restore their hope for a better future inside "The Perimeter."

Administered by the Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center, and borrowing its name from the tactical military boundary between danger and relative safety, The Perimeter is a homeless veteran day center providing a comprehensive range of on-site supportive services and referrals to federal, state and municipal assistance programs for low-income families and the homeless. The center is staffed by an administrator, veteran intake counselor, assessment specialists, case managers, a veterans benefits and job development specialist, and a life skills instructor.

Homeless veterans arrive at The Perimeter through referrals from VA medical centers and community-based service providers, and through Philadelphia Multi-Service and Education Center (PVMSEC) outreach initiatives. Once inside The Perimeter, the veteran has immediate access to showers, haircuts, other hygiene services, food, clothing, laundry and bathroom facilities, emergency shelter, counseling, referrals to services, and transportation assistance. The Perimeter accommodates both men and women veterans, regardless of their VA eligibility status.

A Veteran Outreach Specialist from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office provides on-site benefits counseling and helps veterans file claims and applications for discharge upgrades. Legal assistance is available through the Homeless Advocacy Project. Daily educational sessions are offered on developing life skills, relationships, personal care and health issues, substance abuse programs, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and financial planning. Veterans have immediate, on-site access to a Pennsylvania Job Center Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist, funded by the Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). Medical and mental health assessment, care, treatment and referrals are an integral part of the services offered on-site, every day at The Perimeter.

Placement in the Transitional Housing Program, LZ II, is available to homeless veterans who qualify for PVMSEC programs at the Coatesville VA Medical Center. Qualification depends on verification of VA benefits eligibility and proving substance-free status for at least 90 days. Depending on individual plans and client progress, veterans may stay in the transitional housing program for up to two years.

The PVMSEC was first awarded a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant in 1990 to fund its employment training and placement services. The success of the program resulted in a new grant of \$300,000 for Program Year 2007. HVRP is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-

VETS), in compliance with the requirements of 38 United States Code, Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Section 2021 requires the Secretary of Labor to conduct, directly or through grant or contract, such programs as the Secretary determines appropriate to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force. HVRP is the only federal program wholly dedicated to providing employment assistance to homeless veterans.

Services provided to the veteran client begin with an assessment of personal needs, skills and training necessary for job placement. Results of the assessment are incorporated into an individual plan that includes housing, supportive services, and job preparation and placement assistance.

Once clients are enrolled, case managers help them remain on track and facilitate referrals to whatever services they need to succeed. Through The Perimeter, residents have access to mailing addresses, computers, telephones and other services that help reduce the cost of daily living and employment searches. Training courses on-site include computer repair, hospitality industry positions, and food services. Other educational and vocational program needs are addressed through client plans and referrals to other area agencies. The program includes job placement, help with personal budgets and financial management, and follow-up services.

Just as important as the direct services provided to homeless veterans are the HVRP program's efforts to develop and maintain employment opportunities for its participants. This is accomplished through constant and determined communication with employers throughout Philadelphia and Delaware, Chester, Bucks and Montgomery counties. PVMSEC has sponsored the Philadelphia Stand Down for 15 years, and works closely with several agencies that help veterans facing significant barriers to employment and independent living through memorandums of understanding (MOUs). A partial list includes:

- VA Medical Centers in Philadelphia and Coatesville, PA
- U.S. Department of Labor
- Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
- Deputy Managing Director's City Outreach
- Homeless Advocacy Project
- Tenant's Advisory Group
- Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Access West Philadelphia Mental Health
- Bowling Green Behavioral Health Hospital
- Belmont Hospital
- Combar Mental Health, Mental Retardation
- Eagleville Hospital
- Fairmont Behavioral Outpatient Services
- Philadelphia Gate Keeper for Medical Assistance Consumers
- Friends Hospital

- Horizon House
- Kirkbride Hospital
- OESS Shelter Plus Care II Veterans Housing Program
- Salvation Army offices in Philadelphia, Scranton, PA, Wilmington, DE, and Buffalo, NY.

A large number of PVMSEC clients are elderly or need help working through mental health and substance abuse issues. The assistance network within which the center operates is one of the most extensive in the nation. Compliance with treatment plans can pose problems for homeless veteran clients, but The Perimeter staff prides itself in offering close supervision and support, providing scheduling and transportation assistance. All clients are offered this support. Veterans who are eligible for VA benefits receive medical services through the VA; ineligible veterans receive treatment and follow-up services at network agencies.

The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center has met or exceeded all of its HVRP program goals consistently since the inception of the project. Part of that success can be attributed to the outreach efforts of the organization – to homeless veterans and to area service providers and employers; and to an even larger degree, perhaps, to the comprehensive range of services veterans can access immediately at The Perimeter. The center’s innovative focuses on specialized assistance for the aging, disabled and women veterans have earned the organization a national reputation for providing seamless services delivery across the full continuum of care, as has its embrace of all veterans in need regardless of eligibility status.

<b>Philadelphia VMSEC HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	140	140	100%
Assessments	160	160	100%
Employment Placement	90	88	98%
Permanent housing placement	14	14	100%
Average wage at job placement	\$7.75	\$7.75	100%

■ For more information about the Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center, go to <http://www.pvmsec.org>.

■ For more information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **VLP of Western Pennsylvania Reconnects Veterans to Regional Workforce**

In 1982, a group of Vietnam War veterans started the Veterans Leadership Program (VLP) to address emerging needs of veterans in Southwest Pennsylvania. This grassroots effort has grown into a multi-million dollar organization, mostly funded through grants from government and nonprofit entities. The primary focus of their work is to help veterans achieve self-sufficiency through employment, housing and support services.

Among the agencies funding VLP is the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Through its Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP), homeless veterans who are frequently unable to access traditional employment services receive vital assistance to reenter the workforce. The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project is funded under the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), in compliance with the requirements of 38 United States Code, Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Section 2021 requires the Secretary of Labor to conduct, directly or through grant or contract, such programs as the Secretary determines appropriate to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force.

There are many reasons homeless veterans are unable to access traditional employment programs. These can include disabling conditions, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), HIV-AIDS, and problems associated with substance abuse. Many homeless veterans also have complicated legal issues with which they need assistance. Helping this population requires intensive assessment, case management and counseling services not found in most traditional veteran employment programs.

VLP was awarded a \$151,869 grant in FY2003 that focuses on a job placement and retention program for more than 300 homeless veterans – including National Guard and reservists who have served on active duty other than training – who are unemployed or underemployed. For Program Year 2007, the organization was awarded \$300,000. The target veteran clients possess marketable skills; however, other factors that include addiction, mental health challenges and legal problems, prohibit them from returning to full employment. Participants in the program must have “other than dishonorable discharge” status and provide proof of their veteran status. VLP receives another grant that provides longer-term training for clients who lack marketable skills. VLP provides specialized services for homeless veterans who are female and those who are leaving incarceration. These programs help homeless veterans and their families re-enter the mainstream of society.

VLP is the single largest provider of housing for homeless veterans in the Greater Pittsburgh area. The organization provides housing and supportive services, including utility assistance and other basic needs. VLP administers five U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and two Allegheny County grants to provide transitional and permanent housing for 115 veterans and their family members in 84

apartment units. Clients include individual veterans, both male and female, as well as those with custody of their children.

Financial support for VLP is also provided by:

- Allegheny County Department of Human Services.
- Pennsylvania Department of Labor.
- Allegheny County Department of Economic Development.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Veteran Affairs.
- United Way of Allegheny County.
- Corporations, foundations and private donors.

Executive Director Ron Zola credits a collaborative spirit among several organizations with creating a continuum of care for homeless clients. This continuum includes outreach, assessment, enrollment, training, job placement and follow-up services, housing, transportation, health care and other supportive services.

Access to these services improves the potential for job permanency and self-sufficiency. At least 17 programs support the continuum, including soup kitchens, welfare agencies, shelters, hospitals, food pantries, the VA, DOL Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER).

Several youth service agencies, including Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Boys and Girls Clubs, assist the children of homeless veterans, many of whom are also homeless, with needs assessment and children's programs. This multi-agency, regional collaboration is the result of several years of constructive and follow-up communication among several homeless service providers in Southwest Pennsylvania.

VLP has instituted a fathering initiative that teaches homeless veterans parenting skills and provides opportunities for them to reconnect with their children. Establishing renewed bonds with their children helps veterans reclaim their full sense of self respect and encourages them in their effort to return to more stable lives. The fathering program currently serves 37 parents who have custody of their children.

The regional, multi-agency partnership approach by VLP to serving homeless veterans and their families has become a model for the HVRP program. After awarding HVRP grants, DOL asks all grantees to designate their most innovative approach to providing job training and placement assistance to homeless veterans, and requires grantees to maintain and utilize links with other service providers in the community. DOL also requires grantees to show how their programs are unique and worthy of replication in other areas. DOL-VETS provides technical assistance continuously throughout the grant period, and monitors these programs quarterly with at least one site visit in the third quarter. Reports on the success of the VLP program must demonstrate timely programmatic success by the third quarter of each grant year to qualify for grant renewal.

<b>VLP of Western PA HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	170	148	87%
Assessments	250	254	102%
Employment Placement	107	93	87%
Permanent housing placement	95	98	103%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.90	\$8.94	100%

What makes the collaboration between VLP and the community unique, according to Zola, is the complementary way the agencies work to support each other while minimizing duplication of services. He cites Operation Safety Net, a street outreach program administered by Pittsburgh Mercy Hospital, as a group that locates potential clients. This allows VLP to focus more closely on the activities it performs best, namely job placement, transitional and permanent housing placement and case management.

Other agencies, such as Goodwill, provide his client with job training. This collaboration succeeds, he explains, without a memorandum of understanding, relying on provider familiarity, communication, and a desire among all partners to help clients succeed.

Other key contributors to the success of the VLP program include:

- VA Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER). DOL-VETS pays for these State Workforce Agency employees who can be out-stationed at various locations, including HVRP grantee sites and Department of Veterans Affairs facilities.
  - The VA healthcare system.
  - Outreach at Stand Downs.
  - Accurate and timely administrative and financial systems and reports, which are required to receive continued funding.
- For more information on VLP, see <http://www.vlpwpa.org/>.
  - For more information on HVRP see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Operation Stand Down Nashville Stresses Recruiting, Communication with Employers**

Operation Stand Down Nashville (OSDN) began its work with homeless veterans in 1993 when it first began coordinating a yearly Stand Down event in central Tennessee. By 1999 it had become a 501(c)3 organization and had begun full-time operations. In 2001, OSDN applied for and received a grant from the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service under the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) to provide employment and other supportive services tailored to the specific needs of homeless veterans. Due to its success in helping formerly homeless veterans obtain steady employment and permanent housing, the program has received funding every year since.

The purpose of the HVRP program is to help homeless veterans who are frequently unable to access traditional employment services due to challenges such as legal issues, mental and physical health challenges and drug addiction. HVRP is the only national employment services program that specifically targets homeless veterans. While some HVRP programs have been in existence for several years, providers must reapply as a first-year program every three years and must request renewal in the alternating years.

The OSDN program has a three-pronged approach to the delivery of employment assistance to homeless veterans. The first is providing the resources of traditional homeless employment programs, including items that are needed to go to work, such as clothing, bus tokens, food and eyeglasses. Clients develop a plan to facilitate their job search, including resume preparation, interview training and personal development counseling.

The second service effort involves continuous, effective communication with employers about the advantages of hiring veterans. When the attributes of the veterans are properly described, many employers will select them over a non-veteran.

The third service effort is developing strong support among the various organizations that can help improve employment placement. These include veteran service organizations (VSOs), state employment agencies, for-profit employment agencies, and other relevant groups.

What makes OSDN unique in the community is its ability to enlighten employers about the specific advantages of hiring veterans. Most human resource directors have never served in the military and have little knowledge of the training that soldiers receive. When the unique qualities of veterans are explained, and misconceptions about veterans are laid to rest, many companies are inspired to offer interviews to OSDN clients. By expanding the network of employers involved in the program, OSDN has succeeded in finding employment opportunities for clients that had previously been closed.

OSDN started its HVRP employment services program in 2001 with four employees: an outreach worker, two employment counselors and an employment secretary. Funding has

since been increased to provide a veteran service coordinator, an employment assistant and a front desk coordinator. This increase in staff improved OSDN's ability to provide a more comprehensive level of service with the resources necessary to help clients achieve self-sufficiency.

Bill Burleigh, Executive Director of OSDN, believes the three-pronged approach his organization takes can be easily replicated in other communities. He states that building relationships in the community is key to the program's success. Once employers have embraced the value of hiring program clients, the veterans they hire typically become model employees. The word quickly spreads, with the help of OSDN staff, and participation by other employers increases.

A major requirement for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities served. This includes communicating the availability of the service being provided and collaborating with other organizations to maximize services to the client. Connecting with the community organizations and widely publicizing the program are core functions of the OSDN program.

Having coordinated the annual stand down for the past 11 years, OSDN has built strong partnerships with many participating service organizations in the community, including all of the local social service providers, veteran service organizations, and government agencies that work to end homelessness, including:

#### **Non-Profits**

- The Campus for Human Development
- Dismas House
- Oxford House
- Matthew 25
- Project Return
- Salvation Army
- Nashville Rescue Mission

#### **Government Agencies**

- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center
- VA Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Office
- Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- State of Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
- City of Nashville government agencies

#### **Funders/Foundations**

- United Way
- Center for Nonprofit Management
- HCA Foundation
- Private organizations and civic groups

<b>OSD Nashville HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	174	179	103%
Assessments	204	223	109%
Employment Placement	132	135	102%
Permanent housing placement	63	161	256%
Average wage at job placement	\$9.00	\$11.39	127%

OSDN has by far exceeded all success measures set in Program Year 2006, and its track record in long-term employment placements is commendable by any standard. The OSDN outreach worker has personally experienced homelessness and has a firsthand understanding of the issues homeless people face. This individual excels at finding homeless veterans and building a strong rapport with them. This positive interaction promotes client efforts to access OSDN services.

The staff worker also keeps social service agencies informed of OSDN services. An on-site computer lab with internet access aids job searches and training efforts. OSDN participates as a member of the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, which improves networking with and access to potential employers.

OSDN staff members, while providing employment counseling to homeless veteran clients, also assist them with issues related to housing. The agency provides transitional housing and supportive services to its clients to help them adjust to their new environment. OSDN recognizes the accomplishments of its current housing clients and celebrates the success of former clients at scheduled banquets. Current and former clients are joined at these events by OSDN board members and key members of the community.

Taking time to celebrate client achievements provides hope for current residents that they can succeed, emotional support for graduates to continue their good work, and public knowledge of the outstanding efforts being made by and on behalf of homeless individuals to help them re-enter the workforce and community.

Through a combination of strong human service delivery, excellent marketing of clients and strong network building, Operation Stand Down Nashville provides homeless veterans an opportunity to find and sustain high quality, long-lasting employment. This promotes dignity and self sufficiency for homeless veterans and leads to brighter futures.

- For more information about Operation Stand Down Nashville, go to: <http://www.osdnashville.org>
- For more information on HVRP, go to: <http://www.dol.gov/vets>.

## **American GI Forum–San Antonio Outreach and Diversity Define HVRP Program**

The American GI Forum (AGIF) was originally created in 1948 to provide assistance to veterans of Hispanic heritage who were not being reached adequately by national programs under the authority of the Veterans Administration or by state government programs. Through outreach efforts in Hispanic communities, strong advocacy and local care provider networks, AGIF became experienced in coalition building and a force in developing and implementing integrated service delivery systems long before the idea was recognized as a social services necessity.

Headquartered in San Antonio, AGIF-National Veterans Outreach Program (NVOP) has remained committed to opening the doors of opportunity for underserved veteran populations, but its theater of operations has grown much broader than, perhaps, even its founders could have imagined. A closer look at AGIF's Homeless Veteran Reintegration Project (HVRP) reveals the change – women, African American, Hispanic, disabled and “special disabled” veterans are represented as major subgroups. Not coincidentally, these groups present challenges that share common threads, such as lack of available specialized services, limited financial resources and societal prejudices. And since there is no “one size fits all” solution to the problems that result in homelessness, the diversity of AGIF's program participants presents its own unique obstacles to success.

The AGIF National Veterans Outreach Program was launched in 1972, and it has been providing supportive services to homeless veterans ever since. Already experienced in collaborating with community partners to expand the services homeless veterans need to stabilize their lives and get off the streets, AGIF in San Antonio was awarded its first Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service HVRP grant in 1993. Since that first \$150,000 investment, DOL-VETS has awarded the San Antonio HVRP program more than \$6.3 million, a testament to its ability to provide steady, gainful employment for a diverse homeless veteran population facing mild to severe barriers to re-entry into the workforce.

The cornerstone of AGIF's homeless veteran program continues to be its outreach efforts. Staff search for potential veteran clients through street sweeps, regular visits to emergency shelters, and constant communication with social services organizations. Most homeless veterans are not aware of the assistance that is available; and without AGIF's outreach initiatives, local agencies and community-based organizations would not know about its veteran-specific programs.

Homeless veterans receive an intake assessment to determine their health status and immediate individual needs, eligibility for AGIF homeless veteran programs, and supportive services they will require. Case managers also determine the veteran's eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability and pension benefits, as well as other federal assistance programs.

As veterans are enrolled in the program, every effort is made to take care of their basic needs. This usually means shelter, food, clothing and medical attention. For any services that cannot be provided in-house, staff members rely on other community and government agencies that can provide them. San Antonio has an active Continuum of Care Committee that has more than 50 participating agencies providing services to homeless individuals and families. Government agencies, private groups and community-based organizations have signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with each other to provide those services, and AGIF was instrumental in the formation of that network.

The initial intervention – providing a safe, nurturing environment in which to begin the process of reintegration into society – was facilitated by the creation of the “One-Stop Veteran Service Center.” Several continuum of care service providers are located on-site in one location to provide direct assistance and referrals for homeless veterans. This is where they come into contact with:

- VA Health Care for the Homeless Program
- Transitional housing program placement staff
- Department of Labor Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS)
- DOL-VETS Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program
- DOL-VETS Veterans Workforce Investment Program
- VA VET Center counselors
- Vocational training and educational programs
- Computer skills and Internet training
- Food, clothing and transportation services

Though the HVRP funding is wholly dedicated to employment readiness, job search, employment placement and follow-up case management services, other grants have had a significant impact on the AGIF employment service system. A Department of Housing and Urban Development Veteran Integration Program (VIP) grant helps provide case management and job placement funds, freeing up HVRP funds for more training and employment-related supportive services. The VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program and a VA leased transitional housing project have allowed AGIF to enhance its housing and One-Stop Veterans Service Center programs.

One of the most striking features of the AGIF employment program for homeless veterans is its ability to provide immediate, temporary job placement for program participants in the organization’s box manufacturing and property weatherization companies. Clients can gradually re-orient themselves to the workplace, developing a sense of personal responsibility and achievement, with the benefit of flex-time schedules that allow for visits to health care facilities, service agencies, counseling appointments, and educational and vocational training programs. They also begin to develop a renewed sense of financial responsibility. The objective is to help clients develop the skills they will need to succeed when they re-enter the workforce. The initiative also gives case managers insight into how well clients are progressing in their individual improvement programs as they assess their readiness for other employment.

<b>American GI Forum HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	171	209	122%
Assessments	201	222	110%
Employment Placement	120	150	125%
Permanent housing placement	67	109	163%
Average wage at job placement	\$7.75	\$8.94	115%

AGIF has more than three decades of experience helping homeless veterans, and its staff has a long and celebrated track record finding and developing employment opportunities for its clients. The effort has been enhanced by the organization’s longstanding involvement with the entire San Antonio business and public services community.

AGIF is recognized as San Antonio’s leading authority in the veterans’ employment and training arena, and that helps staff promote mutually beneficial relationships with area employers. Developing cooperative arrangements with, and earning the trust of, private and public employment sectors is a process that requires initiative and diligence. Maintaining and safeguarding those arrangements is paramount to the success of any employment services program.

Participation in the city’s Continuum of Care Committee, active involvement and leadership in the San Antonio Homeless Coalition, and a strong partnership with the Department of Labor, the VA and HUD have contributed to the emergence of AGIF’s San Antonio HVRP as a national model for community-based employment services programs.

■ For more information about the AFIG-San Antonio HVRP program, send email to Ignacio Leija at [ileija@agif-nvop.org](mailto:ileija@agif-nvop.org).

■ For Information on HVRP, see <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Snohomish County Workforce Development Council – Everett, WA**

A recent study by Volunteers of America estimated that there are 65,900 veterans in Snohomish County in Washington State. On any given night, 600 of those veterans are homeless. The city of Everett, about 25 miles north of Seattle, is where the main concentration of homeless veterans spend their time, either on the streets or in shelters. In addition to this city of nearly 100,000, Snohomish County contains more than 2,000 square miles of rural landscape. Some homeless veterans live in these areas near river systems in makeshift campsites.

Snohomish County Workforce Development Council (WDC), with a total budget of \$7.5 million, sought and secured a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant from the Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service to provide employment and other services to the area's homeless veterans. In 2003, WDC was awarded a three-year grant totaling \$550,000. Throughout the grant period, WDC exceeded its goals for job placement and the hourly wage earnings of its clients. Due to this success, the program's funding was raised to \$900,000 in FY 2006 for the next three years. For the first quarter of FY06, WDC exceeded all of its program goals. The HVRP grant is the only direct funding for homeless veteran employment assistance offered by the WDC.

Authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the HVRP program is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access employment training and placement assistance. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), and is the only national program that specifically targets homeless veterans. While some HVRP programs have been in existence for several years, providers must reapply as a first-year program every three years. The HVRP grant program is extremely competitive; fewer than half the organizations that apply for the program receive funding.

With an aim to serve homeless veterans in crisis, the Snohomish County WDC serves veterans ranging from the chronically homeless to those who have recently separated from military service. The WDC's main target population is people who qualify for the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) as youth, adults or dislocated workers. The WIA, a U.S. Department of Labor program, offers a comprehensive range of workforce development activities through statewide and local organizations. In cases where veterans qualify, they are co-enrolled in both the WIA and HVRP programs through WDC.

Using a case management model, Snohomish WDC offers its clients a wide range of services. Veterans receive direct job search assistance, resume and interview skills training, referrals to job openings, referrals to employment workshops, and referrals to community-based organizations and the Department of Veterans Affairs to address their more basic needs. Supportive services are also offered to help make sure those who find employment are able to maintain it.

Collaborations are important to provide these services, and one of the most critical relationships Snohomish County WDC cultivates is with the state Employment Security Department (ESD). ESD is subcontracted to provide the direct client services for the HVRP program. The Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) coordinator are co-located at WDC's urban One-Stop center, WorkSource Everett. This facility provides one place where veterans can go to access all the services they need to become employed.

Amy Persell, Adult Programs Manager for Snohomish County WDC, is enthusiastic when speaking of these collaborations: "We have developed community relationships by being an active partner ourselves. In the social service community, partnerships are a two-way street. You must be active and engaged; and, in my experience, I have found that others will support your program as well."

These partnerships are maintained by participating in local social service groups, along with ESD, such as WorkFirst Local Planning Area, Center Oversight, Human Services Council, Homeless Policy Task Force, and other more impromptu or event-specific meetings.

Starting this current program year, Snohomish County WDC is contracting with an organization called TRAC Associates to provide job retention services. This duty was previously handled by case managers, who will now have more time to devote to delivering services to meet their increased service goals.

Persell praised the ease of access to all of the agency partners' services located in the urban One-Stop center. Persell also highlighted the program's outreach efforts as a replicable practice. "Most of the program outreach is done by the program staff themselves," Persell said. "Program staff market at the local TAP (Transition Assistance Program) workshops to let returning vets know about the services that are available. For those vets who fit into the long-term homeless population, program staff goes to local shelters to market the program services." This strategy allows veterans to have interaction with program staff before they are enrolled, a trust-building exercise.

WDC employs a qualified, dedicated staff, so this initial contact may be the key in making veterans comfortable with the program and the idea of working to reintegrate into society knowing that they will be working with people who care about seeing them succeed. Persell added, "In rural areas, outreach is mainly done through referrals from organizations in the rural areas. Our program manager sits on the county's Homeless Policy Task Force to assist with maintaining those collaborative relationships"

Outreach is important to get homeless veterans into the program, and once they have found employment, follow-up is important to ensure they remain employed. Job retention is an important aspect of WDC's program. The program staff takes the view that retention begins with placement. They make an extra effort to place clients into jobs that will pay well enough, and suit each client's experience and ability. Once clients are placed in these jobs, a series of follow-up contacts are made to make sure that the job

continues to be a good fit, and that everything is going smoothly. As mentioned, TRAC Associates is the new job retention service provider, freeing up more time for program staff to focus on outreach and initial employment.

Over the past three years, Snohomish County WDC’s HVRP program has grown, and that is reflected by their increased funding in the new grant. Over these three years, the staff has learned in the process and is now better able to give veterans the most affective service they can provide. Their belief is that employment is the key to end homelessness, and that emphasis is shown by their results. From FY 2003 through FY 2005, their goal was to employ 300 veterans, and they actually employed 314. This 314 was out of 471 total agency enrollments, for a 67% placement rate. They also exceeded their average hourly wage goal of \$11.00 by ten cents.

The agency’s focus on young veterans returning from Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) was acknowledged by the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans as one of the most effective homeless prevention programs in the nation in 2006.

<b>Snohomish County WDC HVRP – Program Year 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	187	180	96%
Program Enrollments	150	114	76%
Employment Placements	80	73	91%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$11.00	\$12.43	113%
Placed in permanent housing	50	49	98%
Employment After 90 Days	30	22	73%

■ For more information about the Snohomish County Workforce Development Council, go to: [www.snocowdc.org](http://www.snocowdc.org).

■ For Information on HVRP, see <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

## **Washington State Veterans Affairs Sets Pace for Serving Homeless Women Veterans**

The Veterans Services Division (VSD) of the State of Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) has the responsibility of helping homeless veterans in the state. In 2002, VSD noted a gap in services that were available to homeless women, who represent a much higher percentage of the state's homeless population (16.5%) than the national average (6%), and who face unique challenges. With a budget of \$3.7 million already dedicated to existing services, VSD in 2002 applied to the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) for a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP) grant to help provide employment services for homeless female veterans. The agency was awarded a grant of \$249,638 to launch the Homeless Women Veterans Reintegration Project (HWVRP) in July 2002. For Program Year 2007, WDVA received \$350,000 in HVRP grants for its veteran employment assistance programs.

The WVRP program is designed to help employable homeless female veterans overcome obstacles to finding steady employment and gain access to supportive services that will enable them to succeed in re-entering the workforce. Along with their homelessness, clients may have to deal with legal issues, mental and physical health challenges and drug addiction. Many have dependent children and are the only source of family income.

The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project (HVRP) is funded under the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). HVRP is the only national employment assistance program that specifically targets homeless veterans. Even the most successful HVRP programs must compete as a first-year program every three years.

WDVA offers a wide range of services, including:

- Providing assistance with immediate needs such as food, clothing and shelter
- Outreach to homeless providers to identify women veterans who need help
- Employability skills assessments
- Job readiness services – housing needs analysis, therapeutic work, resume development and employment opportunity referrals
- Shelter placement
- Transitional and permanent housing referrals
- 30, 90 and 180-day follow-up services for women receiving permanent housing placement and employment
- Health referrals – including referrals for dental, vision and mental health services.
- A limited amount of prescription assistance
- Job-related needs, such as clothing, transportation, child care, food and other financial assistance
- Education assistance, including remedial courses, trade certification and licensing

- Referrals for domestic abuse, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and sexual trauma treatment and supportive services
- VA benefits and other services, such as disability claims, SSI and other income supports

HWVRP has found a strong connection between sexual trauma and PTSD among homeless female veterans. Case studies show that due to fear, a sense of shame or not being aware help is available, many women have never received the counseling and supportive services they need to regain a sense of normalcy. The HWVRP program enlists the assistance of a veterans' benefits specialist (VBS) who helps these women apply for VA benefits while HWVRP connects them with the health care and other services they need through the local provider network.

HVRP grantees must demonstrate a linkage to other mainstream services that will benefit homeless veterans in the community. HWVRP staff members serve on several homeless coalitions and other groups that focus on the needs of veterans and the homeless. This activity enhances public awareness of HWVRP services and maximizes institutional knowledge of community resources and potential partnerships. Organizations with which HWVRP collaborates include those providing resources such as food stamps, child care, employment, training, clothing, veteran services, medical care, housing and many others.

HWVRP implemented a unique electronic networking system that helps publicize the services it offers. By alerting every legislator, relevant nonprofit community-based organization and public agency, the program extends its outreach to all parts of the state. A widespread mailing of HWVRP brochures and flyers complements the effort. HWVRP believes this networking system has proven very effective in coordinating services and could be implemented in all parts of the country.

In addition to its innovative utilization of a veteran benefits specialist and electronic networking, HWVRP has worked with its community partners to hold a conference for female veterans and providers who assist veterans struggling with homelessness and PTSD. Those partners include VA medical centers, Women Organizing Women, local Veteran Centers, the King County Veterans Program and Veterans Independent Enterprises of Washington.

HWVRP set challenging goals for client services in FY 2006, enjoying considerable success in placing clients in employment that pays a living wage. Among homeless veteran women statewide, one in four was enrolled in the program, and one in five attained housing and employment. There were many clients not counted in the HVRP report who received assistance to access disability and medical benefits through the department and its service delivery partners.

<b>WSDVA Women's HVRP Outcomes – PY 2006</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	75	75	100%
Assessments	105	107	102%
Employment Placement	57	57	100%
Permanent housing placement	51	51	100%
Average wage at job placement	\$9.00	\$12.83	143%

■ For more information on WDVA and HWVRP see:  
[http://www.dva.wa.gov/homeless\\_veteran\\_services.html](http://www.dva.wa.gov/homeless_veteran_services.html).

■ For more Information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.

**Center for Veterans Issues, Ltd.**  
**Serving Milwaukee Veterans for 38 Years**

In 1969, seven returning African-American Vietnam combat veterans who were dissatisfied with the lack of attention to their concerns and needs united to form the Interested Veterans of the Central City (IVOCC) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The goal of IVOCC was to address the welfare, health, education, employment, rehabilitation and economic development issues of Vietnam veterans as they attempted to adjust back into civilian life in the inner city.

In 1973, IVOCC founding members and concerned African-American veterans from other eras gathered in Milwaukee. The name of the organization was changed to the National Association for Black Veterans, Inc. (NABVETS), with the intent to become a national service organization with members nationwide. NABVETS members understood that in order to effectively address the needs of all low-income veterans, the management, administration and technical capability of the organization had to be strengthened.

Center for Veterans Issues (CVI) was developed to fulfill such needs in the mid 1980s by supporting the concerns of all veterans. CVI promotes veterans' issues through program services design, planning and implementation. Since 1994, CVI has provided supportive services and housing to homeless veterans in order for them to obtain employment and a decent place to live.

Based in Milwaukee, the Center for Veterans Issues, Ltd. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit veterans administration and management organization. CVI supports the concerns of all veterans by providing information, resources, identification of funding, technical assistance and organizational development to veteran service organizations. CVI also provides transitional housing to homeless veterans, while offering many services to help homeless veterans transition back into the community.

CVI utilizes a case management approach that directly helps homeless veterans and provides critical linkages for a variety of supportive services throughout the region. The program is "employment focused," and veterans receive the employment and training services they need to re-enter the labor force. Individual assessment, job placement, computer training, job development, career counseling, job interview workshops, and resume preparation are among the services that are provided through the center.

The Education Training and Employment (ETE) program first began in September 1996 with funding under various federal grants. Then, on April 1, 1998, the program was awarded a \$125,000 Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program grant from the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). In the years since, the grant award has increased and currently stands at \$300,000 for Program Year 2007.

ETE services are provided to eligible veterans. The purpose of ETE is to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans. The overall budget for the organization is \$3 million, of which \$300,000 is specifically targeted for the ETE Program.

Veterans enrolled in the HVRP program receive vocational assessments, job readiness training including basic computer skill training, resume development, interview skills training and online job search classes. In addition, participants receive job placement and job retention services and assistance in obtaining occupational training, educational supportive services and financial assistance for clothing, tools and equipment, and appropriate supplies to obtain training and employment. Dental and vision services for veterans seeking employment are also provided. Veterans housed in CVI's transitional facility also receive substance abuse and mental health services; case management; and benefits counseling.

Supportive services such as clothing, referral to medical and substance abuse treatment, and transportation assistance are provided to meet the employment needs of the veteran. The emphasis on helping homeless veterans get and retain jobs is enhanced through coordination with various programs and organizations such as the Social Development Commission and the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee/Veterans Upward Bound.

The target population for HVRP is homeless veterans defined under the McKinney-Vento Act. The average age of clients is 50, and most of them are single males. CVI has found that historically, their target population has larger percentages in the mental health diagnosis and chronic homeless categories. Below are some of the statistics of the program.

- 90% are African American; 10% Caucasian
- 98% have a history of substance abuse
- 50% have a mental health diagnosis
- 40% have one or more felonies
- 50% have a current drivers license
- 50% are chronically homeless
- 50% maintained 6 months of employment during the 2 years prior to enrollment in the program

CVI collaborates with the VA; the State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), including One Stop Centers and W-2 agencies; area nonprofits; local colleges; veteran service organizations; UWM-Veterans Upward Bound program; faith-based organizations; and local neighborhood development associations. They also have developed partnerships with private dental and vision care providers and work in conjunction with the VA under their its Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem program.

ETE has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development outlining the services provided by the state to clients by the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) at the One-Stop Job Centers. All other partnerships are developed and monitored through regular collaboration meetings.

The ETE program focuses on developing realistic employment plans through meeting with the multidisciplinary teams of VA and CVI staff. They utilize a combination of one-on-one and small group training to prepare veterans for school, occupational training or employment placement. ETE teaches job search skills with the philosophy of “teaching a man to fish is better than just giving him the fish.”

They also have a somewhat unique approach to job retention. All of their employed veterans are invited to join the Knights Group facilitated by the HVRP Job Placement/Retention Specialist. Meetings are held monthly at an area restaurant and serve a two-fold purpose: to offer group supportive services for typical issues that arise in the workplace and to provide a social activity for veterans in recovery. The camaraderie and support of the members of the Knights Group helps to keep these vets connected to services and gives them a sense of community. This activity has also helped improve the HVRP program’s retention and job longevity success.

In the last year CVI has exceeded its goals primarily in the areas of job retention – 90 and 180 days. Their key strategies are the availability of job retention services and the overall strategy of helping clients find jobs that match both their skills and interests. Staff believes that, “If you like your job you are less willing to resort to behaviors that could result in losing your job.”

CVI also allows HVRP veterans to reside in the center’s transitional facility for up to two years, which allows them to focus on school, training, employment and obtaining AODA and mental health services rather than just taking any job that will “pay the rent.” This reduces the stress of finding and maintaining safe, affordable housing while they are working to get their life back in order.

What began as a program focused on providing outreach services, vocational counseling, assisting eligible veterans to enroll in post-secondary degree programs and occupational training programs, and ensuring job placements has grown over the years to include career exploration, job readiness training, motivational/self-esteem building counseling, dental/vision funding and job retention services. As the HVRP program evolved, it shifted from focusing on job placements to matching the veterans’ skills and interests with employers, which has resulted in increased job placement and retention success.

By promoting more intensive and advanced economic activity through education, improved tools and techniques, diversifying available financing, and creation of new businesses, CVI will continue to increase economic development in the inner city. CVI is researching small business initiatives to create jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for veterans, even those working to overcome multiple barriers to conventional employment.

The center has a long history of finding and developing ways for veterans to rise up and reclaim their rightful place in society as independent and successful citizens.

<b>Center for Veterans Issues HVRP – PY 2006 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total program assessments	135	135	100%
Program Enrollments	70	60	85%
Employment Placements	31	38	123%
Average hourly wage @ placement	8.50	10.75	126%
Placed in permanent housing	60	59	98%
Employment After 90 Days	14	21	150%

- For more information on the Center for Veterans Issues, go to: [www.cvivet.org](http://www.cvivet.org).
- For more Information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.