



NATIONAL COALITION for HOMELESS VETERANS

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Best Practices for Non-Urban HVRP Programs (March 29, 2012)

HVRP and Best Practices Overview

Presented by Baylee Crone, Director of Technical Assistance, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

Background on HVRP and Best Practices

The purpose of the HVRP program is to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment with the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problem facing homeless veterans.

For more information on general HVRP program practices, please reference the power point located at http://nchv.org/docs/Best_Practices_Non-Urban_Programs_March2012.pdf

Start-Up Barriers and Pre-Employment Training

Presented by Paulette Ridsen-Rice, Program Director, Goodwill of the Heartland

Biography

Ms. Paulette Ridsen-Rice has been employed with Goodwill for six years. She currently holds the title of Program Director and oversees all programs and services for the East Region of Goodwill of the Heartland, including the HVRP program. Before becoming Program Director, Ms. Ridsen-Rice worked as an Employment Specialist for the HVRP program. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business from Western Illinois University and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from St. Ambrose University. Prior to working for Goodwill, Ms. Ridsen-Rice worked as an Employment Specialist for other non-profit and state agencies performing similar work. Ms. Ridsen-Rice has thirteen years of experience in the social services field, working with a wide range of populations including ex-offenders, dislocated workers, low-income, and at-risk youth.

Start-Up Barriers

- A strategy for success and a plan to implement is needed. To create this plan, keep in mind:
 - o Establish the number of participants your organizations can assist.
 - o Define what services you will offer to the veterans and how you will provide these services, whether directly or through a referral.
 - o Service delivery should be individualized.
 - o Develop barriers in your working relationships with the veterans. While earning a participant's trust is essential to a successful relationship, employees must be wary of misuse of the program. This does not imply that a program should not be flexible to the individual needs of each participant.
 - o Think outside of the box to continue participant engagement.

- Create an outreach strategy to bring participants into the HVRP program. Outreach often involves physically going out into the community and locating homeless veterans. Partnering with the local VA can create a more successful outreach strategy and increase the number of referrals to your organization.

- Develop an incentives strategy to insure the participant's continuous return and hold the veterans accountable. Examples of this may involve providing a gas card or additional bus tickets once a participant has attended a class or receiving additional clothing once they have obtained

employment. Staggered incentives insures participation within multiple aspects of the HVRP program.

- Partnerships within the community can help to advise, refer participants to, and place participants into employment. These partnerships are vital throughout the entire program process, including the start-up phase. The more partners you have, the stronger and more successful your program will be.
- HVRP program requirements differ from other federal grant programs and may require a new filing system. Contact your grant officer for guidance to ensure your files are in order and that you are correctly reporting on your program procedures and outcomes.
- Continually evaluate and adjust your program as your organizations progresses through the start-up process. As more participants are referred, your HVRP program may be able to grow, offering an increased frequency and number of services and classes.
- Seek additional outside funding opportunities to increase the program scope and availability to include such options as mentoring events and physical fitness activities. These types of activities allow for participants to interact with positive influences, including previous graduates of the program, staff, and community members, while having fun and creating a trust and cohesiveness within the group. Activity examples include laser tag; bowling; going to the movies; dinner; fishing; and billiards.

Pre-Employment Training

- Operating a Pre-Employment Training program, where participants can begin immediate, paid, part-time work, helps to ensure that these veterans continue to participate in program activities while working toward obtaining full-time, permanent employment. While in the pre-employment training program, participants work directly with a job coach who provides training on all aspects of the job and the field of employment.
- Create requirements and limit the number of hours that participants can work in the immediate job setting, allowing the participant time to job-search and participate in program activities. Requirements to continue working can include:
 - o Turning in a weekly job search log;
 - o Attending weekly meetings with an Employment Specialist employed within the HVRP program;
 - o Participating in weekly class sessions;
 - o Attending any weekly scheduled medical appointments or appointments with the VA or community partners.
- Pre-employment training allows the participant to experience, learn, and develop valuable skills that are needed to gain employment within the community, including developing relationships with co-workers, punctuality, working within a time schedule that includes scheduled breaks.

Community Partnerships

Presented by Richard Turner, Manager of Employment and Training, Veterans Inc.

Biography

Mr. Richard Turner has been working in veterans services for the past 4 years. His career at Veterans Inc. started when he was hired as a job developer. When he started Veterans Inc. had only one grant; currently they now have 6. This success comes about by “delivering the goods.” Mr. Turner has been managing the dept. for the past 15 months.

Community Partnerships

- Developing partnerships with other non-profits, private business, and religious organization in your community is essential to HVRP program success.
 - o Other organizations in the community need to know what your organization’s mission is and the services you offer. This knowledge allows for an open-door effect, where a qualified participant can be referred to your organization despite where he/she first seeks assistance.
 - o Community partnerships and regular communication allow for like-minded organizations to work together, avoid duplication of services, and continually improve through dialogue and experience.
 - o The more community partnerships an HVRP program develops, the more employment opportunities and resources become available for participants.

- Through HVRP program funds and memorandums of understand (MOUs) created with community partners, veterans can participate in specialty training programs that educate and certify them for employment opportunities. These specialty programs can include such trainings for EMT, EKG Technician, and CDL Drivers.

- Connecting with the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOPs) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) provides liaisons and direct connections to the local career centers throughout the state, creating more opportunities for participants. DVOPs and LVERs work directly in the local career centers, with the primary goal of placing homeless veterans into employment.

- Developing a working relationship with the local VA offices allows participants to receive assistance with any VA benefits they may be eligible for.

- Attending Stand Down events is an opportunity to network with other organizations, build relationships, and promote your organizations mission, expanding your community partnerships and the resources accessible to your organizations and subsequently your participants.

- Become involved in your local Chamber of Commerce.

Q&A

1. At what point do HVRP programs “exit” the participants?

The best definition for “exiter” in the HVRP program comes straight from the Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) in the SGA. The definition of exiter under the TAG is as follows:

“A participant who is placed or dropped during a quarter and has not received services for 90 days and is not scheduled to receive future services. The following services do not count as ‘future services’:

- Additional Career Planning
- Contacting the Employer
- Assisting with Work-Related Problems
- Peer Support Groups
- Informational Mailings, and
- Referral to Supportive Services.

Once a Participant Placed into Employment becomes an Exiter, the sequence for tracking outcomes is determined by the Exit Quarter. Those Participants experiencing a gap in service of 90 days or more due to a delay before the beginning of training, a serious health/medical condition; and/or temporary departure from the area such as for National Guard/Reserve duty may be temporarily exempted from being exited for a portion of the grantee's period of performance. *Note: Retention services, while extremely important, are not considered "active" or pre-employment services that delay a Participant exit.*

The general rule is that all Participants are to be exited by the end of 4th quarter of each Program Year. Those participants who were exited because of the conclusion of the Program Year, and still actively seeking services (i.e. they were not placed, were not terminated and did not drop out), may be re-enrolled by the grantee in the next Program Year."

2. What kind of relationship must an organization build with the teaching academy to provide technical training, such as an EMT program?

An HVRP program should try to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with community colleges, trade schools, and other institutions of higher education that can offer training programs that fit within the program year for HVRP participants. These arrangements are extremely beneficial for grantees and their participants, allowing access to accreditation and certificate programs that can open new opportunities for homeless veterans. Often, coordinating with student veteran organizations and admissions offices on local campuses can lead to progressive negotiated enrollment fees, course schedules, and program requirements.

3. Is there any dedicated funding source for homeless veterans with DWIs needing a reinstatement of their licenses?

Currently, no dedicated funding exists for this specific purpose. However, local legal associations and foundations often offer support to organizations and their homeless veteran clients facing substantial barriers to employment as a result of legal issues.

4. What additional resources are there for homeless veterans for finding employment?

To support areas where HVRP might not be available, the NCHV website and the Department of Labor- Veterans' Employment and Training Services (DOL VETS) websites have substantial resources to facilitate access to employment. NCHV's dedicated employment portal provides a full array of resources to service providers and homeless and at-risk veterans, seeking information about employment tools and opportunities; information for service providers can be found [here](#) and information for job seekers can be found [here](#).

Many of the DOL-VETS tools are connected to the O*NET, which provides reliable data related to employment opportunities. You can access these resources [here](#):

5. Do veterans who are currently incarcerated qualify to participate in HVRP?

Specified in the Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA), eligibility for enrollment in HVRP is dependent on the potential participant meeting the definitions of homeless and veteran, which can include an incarcerated veteran if he meets these definitions. Veterans with dishonorable discharge are not eligible to receive services under HVRP. Organizations are encouraged to work with local Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJO) located at the VA Medical Centers and Homeless and Veteran Treatment Courts, where available. A list of VJO's can be found [here](#).

6. Does being a registered sex offender prevent a veteran from participating in HVRP?

Enrollment in HVRP is based on the veteran meeting the definitions of homeless and veteran as outlined in the Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA). The most recent SGA can be found [here](#).