



NATIONAL COALITION
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Stand Down Promising Practices

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What the Promising Practices Guide Offers

In 2012, the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) Technical Assistance Center (TA Center) contacted 20 successful Stand Down organizers to identify which practices have guided their success in planning for and executing Stand Down events. These organizations have assisted countless numbers of homeless veterans over the last 25 years, offering a “Hand Up, not a Hand Out” philosophy which facilitates empowerment and presents the opportunity for veterans experiencing homelessness to engage meaningfully in supportive services that facilitate a move out of homelessness.

Stand Down, a community intervention established in 1988 by founders Dr. Jon Nachison and Robert Van Keuren in San Diego, CA, was founded on the need to connect homeless veterans to meaningful services and a tightly connected community in an environment that mirrors the safety of a move from the battlefield. NCHV has witnessed the expansion of this critical program across the country and serves as the base for its registered organizations. Now, events are hosted by more than 180 community partners each year to support homeless veterans, their spouses, and their children.

Stand Down events offer a wide range of services depending on the needs of the veterans in the local community. The CHALENG Report, published annually by the Department of Veterans Affairs, outlines the major unmet needs of homeless veterans as reported by the veterans and the service providers who work on their behalf. The 2010 Report shows major unmet needs remain consistent over time, including the following:

Top Ten Highest Unmet Needs Identified by VA and Community Providers, FY 2008-2010

2008	2009	2010
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child care 2. Long-term, permanent housing 3. Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines 4. Legal assistance for child support issues 5. Family reconciliation assistance 6. Dental care 7. Credit counseling 8. Re-entry services for incarcerated Veterans 9. Help managing money 10. Guardianship (financial) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child care 2. Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines 3. Legal assistance for child support issues 4. Family reconciliation assistance 5. Long-term, permanent housing 6. Credit counseling 7. Dental care 8. Help managing money 9. Re-entry services for incarcerated Veterans 10. Guardianship (financial) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child care 2. Legal assistance for child support issues 3. Legal assistance for outstanding warrants/fines 4. Family reconciliation assistance 5. Legal assistance to help restore a driver's license 6. Credit counseling 7. Long-term, permanent housing 8. Dental care 9. Help managing money 10. Guardianship (financial)

Often the first access points for veterans experiencing homelessness, Stand Downs were created to provide the services that match these unmet needs on the local level. From tangible goods—including sleeping bags, socks, personal care items and boots—to services—including haircuts, dental care, communication with family members and legal services—Stand Downs strive to connect veterans to essential items and services that are delivered by the people who know these veterans best: service providers in the community.

These events do much more than offer services and referrals. They offer homeless veterans walking onto the grounds of Stand Down

For many veterans, Stand Down is the first and most powerful access point within the community for services.

Other Stand Down Resources

National Stand Down Program Guide by Dr. Jon Nachison
(http://www.nchv.org/images/uploads/Stand_Down_Guide_update_08_Layout_1.pdf)

Taking the Court to Stand Down by the American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness and Poverty and NCHV
(http://www.nchv.org/images/uploads/HCP_Stand_Down_Training_Book1_final.pdf)

Materials from DOL-VETS

Stand Down Federal Register Notice
(<http://gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-01-28/html/2014-00755.htm>)

Stand Down Special Provisions
(<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/stand%20down/Stand%20Down%20Special%20Grant%20Provisions.doc>)

Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) for Stand Down Grant Funding
(<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/stand%20down/TechAssistanceGuideFY07StandDown.doc>)

both a sense of community and a feeling of hope that has long been absent in their lives. Connectivity to service providers and agency representatives who give realistic, empathic support and community can mean the difference between an acceptance of assistance and further isolation.



This Promising Practices Guide contains experience, guidance, and best practices condensed from 20 surveys completed by expert organizations that, following the example of this intervention's founders, serve as the heartbeat of Stand Down events throughout the year. This guide offers a snapshot of how several successful HVRP grantees and their partners working in employment services have been able to develop and execute Stand Down events across the country. NCHV strongly suggests that readers also review the wealth of other resources on Stand Down (see sidebar for additional resources on Stand Down).

An Introduction to the Experts

Veterans Village of San Diego (VVSD): “VVSD started Stand Down 25 years ago, and since then has provided guidance to over 30 other Stand Downs. These organizations need varied levels of assistance, and VVSD is able to provide guidance, whether the program needs a few consultations or step-by-step assistance from start to finish. We emphasize that the most important goal for Stand Down must be establishing consistency. The homeless veterans are aware of that, so they expect that. To keep it from becoming too big, we assign all tables in advance and standardize our process. This makes all providers equal and keeps the event about the veteran.”

Veterans First: “When we first started, we received guidance from [VVSD in] San Diego. We have been participating in Stand Down for two years so far. We have offered guidance to Ventura County and San Gabriel Valley. To get organized, we contacted all county government agencies, the VA, veteran and service organizations and nonprofit service providers. We started nine months in advance and held monthly meetings. In the last six weeks we held the meetings every two weeks. We always keep a strict time schedule since many of the providers were government and only had their lunch hour to be there.”

U.S. Veterans Initiative: “The Prescott site has participated for over six years, with five years of funding through DOL-VETS. When we first started, we researched several Stand Downs and asked many questions. After we did this research, we monitored our Stand Downs to identify what needs were not being met and adjusted to cover them in future

years as much as possible. Over the past few years, we have received several phone calls and emails requesting help from other organizations, and we have provided suggestions, offered assistance and recommended that they visit our Stand Down events or others closer to them to learn from others in the field.”

Operation Stand Down Nashville: “We have participated in Stand Down for 20 years. In 1992, VVSD came to Nashville, TN and presented on the concept of Stand Down. Now, we have provided support and guidance to many events in the intervening years. Until 2012, Stand Down funds were part of our HVRP grant and in 2012 we applied for the DOL-VETS funding separately. The Annual OSD Event has grown over the last 20 years so that there are now 135 organizations providing support, with 42 social service agencies. Any type of service a veteran needs or wants is there for services and discussions with the veterans.”

Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries: “In the early days, starting in 1994, we used Stand Down to bring the homeless veterans in an area into contact with the VA and agencies that could help them. That seemed to work fairly well. We fed them, clothed them, and did what we could to get them into services. Using this approach, we did some real good for these veterans. Now, we are seeing mainly veterans who are already in the system: those with a HUD-VASH voucher, those in a GPD program, or those who are already working with several teams at the VA. It changes how our Stand Down works and the priorities we make in working with veterans.”

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MAC-V): “We have been a part of Stand Down for 20 years and have been organizing the main Minneapolis Stand Down for seven years. When we started, we did not receive guidance. We took over the event and have a few records of how it was done, but we really started from scratch. Because of our experience, we have been able to offer guidance to other Stand Downs in MAC-V. Now, we all work together to improve all of our Stand Downs. While we have no formal major committee, we have difference subcommittees for different sectors of services. We always survey the participants and providers to get feedback on the event. Our goal and the philosophy is to reach as many veterans with as many good services as possible.”

Goodwill Industries of Central Illinois: “We have participated in four Stand Downs and have helped groups to develop “mini-Stand Downs” where they are needed. We used the HVRP grant to support Stand Down for the first three years when it was an allowable inclusion in the grant. The support we receive allows us to put on an outstanding Stand Down that benefits more than 120 homeless veterans.”

Applying for DOL-VETS Grant Funding

Financial assistance to support Stand Down events is available through the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) sponsored by the Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). The Stand Down Federal Register Notice (FRN), published in the Federal Register, outlines the specific qualifications and processes for applying for this financial support. Eligible entities may receive up to \$7,000 for one-day events and up to \$10,000 for multi-day events. In Fiscal Year 2011, DOL-VETS funding supported 96 Stand Down events across the country, awarding \$742,405 in financial support.

The funding through DOL-VETS is the only federal funding source exclusively devoted to supporting Stand Down events, and organizations considering hosting or participating in Stand Down events should educate themselves on this funding opportunity. Before applying, interested entities should:

Things to Consider When Creating an Application Timeline

- Allow plenty of time for application development.
- Be sure to include internal deadlines for various components of the application from budget representatives and technical staff.
- Plan to submit MORE THAN 90 days prior to event!
- Schedule time for a return for revisions.
- Be aware of when the anticipated acceptance date is and how/if it will affect your Stand Down.

1. Develop a **strong understanding of the process** for completing an application.
2. **Determine roles** internally for developing the application.
3. Be knowledgeable about **what DOL-VETS funding can and cannot support**.

Understanding the Process

Information on applying for financial support for Stand Down through DOL-VETS can be obtained by reading the Federal Register Notice (FRN) published in the Federal Register and associated documents, including the Special Provisions and Technical Assistance Guide. The current FRN was published Jan. 18, 2014, and tentatively supports events through Fiscal Year 2016. Potential applicants are required to respond fully to all requests outlined within the FRN. Failure to include all relevant information can result in a denied or returned application for funding, potentially delaying and preventing receipt of critical financial support. Applicants can use the Stand Down Grant Application Review Checklist, available on the DOL-VETS website, to ensure that all components of the application are included.

Applying for funding can take time. Once an application is submitted to a DVET, it must be reviewed and approved at the State, Regional, and National levels before the application can be fully processed. While official guidelines request submission 90 days prior to the event date, successful Stand Down planners often submit these applications many months in advance.

Where Can I Get More Information?

- DVET (<http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/>)
- DOL-VETS Stand Down ([http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/stand%20down/Stand%20Down%20Application%20Checklist%20\(12-29-10\).doc](http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/stand%20down/Stand%20Down%20Application%20Checklist%20(12-29-10).doc))
- NCHV's TA Center provides support documents, including a Stand Down development manual, allowable/unallowable costs presentation, important dates fact sheet, Stand Down one-pager, and spring training sessions information (http://nchv.org/index.php/service/service/stand_down/)

Even applications that require no revisions can take longer than 90 days to process, especially near the end of the Fiscal Year. Organizations that host events on the same date each year will often submit an application for next year's funding as soon as one event has ended. While applications submitted after July 1 for events to be held after Sept. 30 will likely be held by DOL-VETS pending future funding appropriations or a continuing resolution, organizations can still submit the application at any time to assist partners at DOL-VETS in processing applications in time for funding.

Applicants should plan out a timeline that includes application development, submission, return for revisions, and acceptance. This timeline should establish a date of acceptance prior to the 90 day submission deadline to allow for potential revisions of program scope or budget.

The NCHV Technical Assistance Center offers trainings on the Stand Down FRN every spring, pending appropriation of Stand

Down funds. The TA Center has developed, in coordination with partners at community agencies and DOL-VETS, several materials to guide new applicants through this process. These materials are available on the NCHV and DOL-VETS websites.

Potential applicants should review the Federal Register Notice, Special Grant Provisions, and Technical Assistance Guide on the DOL-VETS website prior to applying to ensure compliance with the program regulations. Potential applicants can also gain a stronger understanding of the application process by reviewing training materials archived on the NCHV website. Applicants may find it helpful to review NCHV teleconferences—including “Stand Down: History and Program Structure” and “Stand Down: Program Planning and Financing”—and fact sheets—including “Stand Down Overview,” “Allowable and Unallowable Costs,” and “Dates and Timetables.”

Determining Roles

After reviewing the FRN and associated materials, potential applicants will need to plan out their process for applying. This includes identifying key on-site and partner technical experts to contribute application content, deciding on a point person to give final approval to the application components, and choosing a representative to coordinate the application itself. This last person must ensure that internal and external deadlines are met, and confirm that all application components are in accordance with the FRN. Stand Down experts insist on developing a process that requires multiple verifications of application content and anticipated expenditures within the budget.

Depending on the capacity of an organization, the team of Technical Expert(s), Approval Manager, and Application Coordinator may be only a few persons or it may consist of an entire organization. Each applicant should determine who is best able to serve these various functions based on expertise, authority, and available time to devote to the application.

In some organizations, a separate representative serves as the Budget Expert; this role is often served by the Technical Expert(s) or the Approval Manager. Individuals within the organization with varied areas of expertise will be able to contribute to the application to assess services proposed versus actual service costs.

For organizations with grant writing and business development personnel, the application for Stand Down funds through the Department of Labor is often the responsibility of the Grant Writer or Business Development Director. However, the majority of programs do not have the institutional funds to support a separate Grant Writer, placing the burden of application development on staff members who are actively engaged in providing program services. Often, the individual in charge of veterans services within an organization or the organization's President, Executive Director, or CEO is also in charge of the funding application. While some organizations hire external grant writers, the majority of applicants utilize in-house expertise to develop their Stand Down funding application.

While the additional work load might be intimidating to some programs considering applying for funding, there are benefits to having the Technical Expert(s), the Approval Manager, and the Application Coordinator in-house. The experience these individuals have with the actual process of service delivery means that the grant application is more likely to reflect the actual services to be delivered.

Resources, guides, tools, and training provided by NCHV's TA Center, DVETS and other Stand Down organizers can help individuals with little grant writing experience translate their service needs and program into the language of a Federal funding application. Potential applicants are encouraged to review and engage in these resources, annual trainings, and individual consultations.

Who Creates the Application?

Technical Expert(s): provide content and review of content; compare budget to technical narrative deliverables.

Budget Expert: when needed, a separate budget expert determines compatibility between budget and technical narrative.

Approval Manager: approves of application components; reviews budget; has authority to sign application; serves as point of contact for DVET and DOL-VETS staff at the National Office in Washington, D.C.

Application Coordinator: ensures all partners are submitted content according to internal and external timelines; confirms that application directly matches FRN requirements; edits information from technical experts to ensure consistency; monitors application progress.

Making a Budget: Allowable and Unallowable Costs

After drafting a timeline of application development and determining who can serve in the various roles to complete the application, a potential applicant should review NCHV’s “Allowable and Unallowable Costs” Fact Sheet to determine whether the DOL-VETS funding matches the budget needs of the event. Allowable costs must enhance employment and/or job training opportunities and promote self-sufficiency. For examples of allowable and unallowable costs, see NCHV’s Stand Down Expenses fact sheet.

The core objectives of the HVRP program are “to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans.”

DOL-VETS financial support to Stand Down events was developed to help HVRP grantees and their partners in the community better connect homeless veterans attending Stand Downs to the employment services and supportive services that facilitate employment readiness. As a result, financial support from DOL-VETS must support employment readiness through provision of appropriate supportive services and connectivity to American Job Center and HVRP grantee staff members who can provide employment services to homeless and disabled veterans.

Understanding the unique development of each event and the unique needs of homeless veterans in each area, DOL-VETS funding is flexible as long as these goals and objectives are a primary focal point of services.

When determining the best use of Stand Down funds, potential applicants should ask themselves:

What are the major items and services we must have, and who in the community can support that?

When all donated goods and services are documented, what is still missing?

Who ELSE can we contact to meet the remaining needs?

Do these missing items qualify as allowable costs?

Will the DOL-VETS funding support our WHOLE event, or can it support one or two specific items that we would otherwise not be able to secure?

Experts agree that Stand Down events are usually “cash poor”, even when they are flush with other resources. Organizers collect items throughout the year to distribute to veterans, including personal care items, boots and non-perishable food items. They participate in fundraisers or obtain sponsors for specific meals or services through connections to the community. Even with these efforts, some critical items like security services, food, or signage are difficult to obtain through donated resources, or sponsorship, making the “cash” support of DOL-VETS a necessity.

All experts admitted that no matter how large or expansive their events currently are, they would either be unable to host a Stand Down or would need to substantially limit services provided at their event if they did not have the support from DOL-VETS. Loss of this support would require a complete revision of planning strategies, would increase time that must be spent on additional funding requests to partners that are already stretched in their offerings, and would severely limit the supplies and resources that are provided to veterans. Organizers expressed considerable concern that these limitations would potentially impact the veterans' interest in returning on subsequent days or engaging in follow-up services.



Experts in the community use DOL-VETS funding to support a wide range of services and items that would otherwise be difficult to secure. Sample services include flu shots, transportation to and from shelters, and security. Items provided to veterans during Stand Down often include food and hygiene care products. Items that support veterans after Stand Down include moderated grocery store gift cards, clothing, sleeping bags, boots, and personal care items.

Some events use the DOL-VETS funding as the major source of funding for their Stand Down budget, paying for nearly everything except volunteer clothing and lunches for planning meetings. Especially in rural areas, this funding helps organizations to obtain basic items, like soap, food, and sleeping bags, as well as hard-to-secure items, such as non-prescription eye glasses or rentals of chairs and tables.

Other organizing entities have larger budgets that include private resources and donations, and the DOL-VETS funding serves to address specific gaps in necessary services and items that would otherwise be unavailable to the veterans, such as location stability through facility rental, transportation services, and internet connectivity to directly register veterans for data collection needs and follow-up services. Recognizing the needs of veterans with disabilities, organizers often use DOL-VETS funding to rent accessible port-a-potties and develop accessible program materials for veterans with varied limitations and accommodation needs.

All Stand Down organizers must clearly define how DOL-VETS funding supports services and items for homeless veterans **only**; this funding cannot pay for staff or volunteers! Stand Down funding cannot be used in materials to directly promote the Department of Labor, but organizations often use it to pay for printing, maps and signs to clearly direct veterans to the services they need within Stand Down.

Volunteers

A properly organized volunteer workforce can make a huge difference in the overall success of your Stand Down event. Some organizations count on the help of hundreds of community volunteers for their Stand Downs. When dealing with volunteers, it is wise to have a Volunteer Coordinator who will be responsible for organizing this workforce, identifying volunteers with certain specialties, and efficiently distributing tasks according to the needs of the event. If done effectively, you will avoid duplication of work and effort.

When partnering with organizations, such as other service providers or government agencies, make sure to maintain a clear line of communication regarding the duties Stand Down volunteers will be performing and, if available, refer them to the Volunteer Coordinator in case they also have volunteers participating with them. For those volunteers coming with other organizations, make sure their name badge or pass clearly states the name of the organization with which they are affiliated. This approach makes it easier to monitor and identify the area where they will be assisting.

It can be useful to have a designated area where volunteers can gather to wait for instructions or where they can take a break. Volunteers who have some time to spare may want to sort out the surplus of giveaways (personal care kits, clothes, food, information packets, etc.) in order to efficiently distribute them among the veterans.

Speakers and Special Guests

Homeless veterans will become more optimistic about their future if they receive one-on-one time with a public/political figure. This will reassure them that they have not been forgotten and that their community and political representatives are working arduously to provide a better, reliable support system for them and their families.

When having special guests or speakers at your Stand Down event, keep them up to date with changes made to the event agenda. It is crucial for the speakers to adhere to their time frame. Remind them (and the coordinating staff) to keep their presentations short, simple, and straightforward. It is important to reiterate to speakers and providers that the event's main objective is to assist our veterans and to address their most urgent needs and concerns.

Veteran programs such as HVRP rely on a strong communication system with community service providers and other veteran agencies. They serve as great advertising platforms for Stand Downs, attracting a large variety of service providers willing to participate at the event. Likewise, political advocacy, if planned effectively, can promote strong support from local authorities and federal partners who would be willing to lend their resources/services during Stand Down, including EMTs, fire, and police. If seeking participation from public officials, reach out to them early in the planning process and with a formal invitation. Do not forget to include details and logistics of the event, including directions for parking.

DOL and VA Partners at Stand Down

No single entity can plan, host, and execute a successful Stand Down alone. In fact, receiving financial support through either DOL-VETS or support from the local VA Medical Center requires that the coordinating entity establish a strong service delivery partnership with staff members from DOL and VA to deliver critical employment and medical services at or following the Stand Down.

This section focuses specifically on the important role that government partners from DOL and VA play in delivering a successful Stand Down event (overall partnership development with other community partners is discussed in the next section). Full integration of each of these partners is necessary and requires close coordination early in the planning process.

Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantees consist of community agencies with long histories of delivering employment and training services to homeless veterans to support placement in gainful employment and the improved integration of service delivery networks. When HVRP is co-located with or closely connected to other Federal grantees, including Grant and Per Diem (GPD) programs and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), comprehensive service packages can more closely and efficiently be coordinated for Stand Down participants, making follow up and planning easier for the veteran and the coordinators.

Other partners, including the local American Job Center and the VA Medical Center, include state and local government staff members who can offer training, education, employment, medical, and psychological support services to all veterans, including the homeless veterans who attend Stand Down. Potential applicants need to know who to contact at each of these sites to ensure that the full range of services are being delivered to veterans at Stand Down.

HVRP Grantees at Stand Down

All experts interviewed for the Promising Practices Guide either have an HVRP grant or work closely with HVRP grantees in their service area. Prior to the 2010 Program Year, HVRP grantees were allowed to use a por-

tion of their HVRP grant funds to support Stand Down activities. Now, all HVRP grantees must apply separately for HVRP funds in response to the FRN. Current HVRP grantees should not include funds for Stand Down within their overall HVRP application. This change benefits current HVRP grantees that can now allocate that funding within their HVRP budget to other program activities.

HVRP grantees are encouraged through the HVRP Solicitation for Grant Applications to either host or participate in Stand Down events locally. Generally, only one HVRP grantee is represented at each Stand Down event, but HVRP grantees that are located close geographically to one another will coordinate their Stand Down events so as to provide services throughout the year based on the needs of the veterans in the community. New Stand Down funding applicants that have HVRP grantees in their service area should contact these grantees before deciding on a date for Stand Down to confirm that events do not conflict. This process is necessary for both HVRP grantees and other organizations applying for funding. Applicants should focus on **coordination**, not **competition**.

Generally, only one HVRP grantee is represented at each Stand Down event, but HVRP grantees located close geographically to one another will coordinate their Stand Down events so as to provide services throughout the year based on the needs of the veterans in the community.

Given the requirements that HVRP grantees connect and coordinate with American Job Center staff and services through the VA, these grantees are already poised to deliver on the core objectives of the Stand Down funding support. Stand Down experts agreed that while direct HVRP services are often not provided at the Stand Down, it does provide HVRP staff members with the opportunity to conduct outreach, to encourage future enrollments and to educate veterans and partners about HVRP services to guide future referrals. Veterans can be enrolled in HVRP on the day of Stand Down, but generally this is done in a follow-up appointment when the veteran and the HVRP grantee can spend more time assessing the veteran's job readiness and making an appropriate and comprehensive IEP.

When HVRP grantees are actively involved on the day of Stand Down, they can play several roles in executing the event. Some grantees will occupy a table and offer sign-up sheets for all free programs offered by the HVRP grantee; this process encourages veterans to learn more about the grantee agency, even if employment services through HVRP is not the original primary objective of the veteran. For programs like Operation Stand Down Nashville that run a regular service or drop-in center for veterans, the Stand Down provides an opportunity to remind veterans that drop-in services are available on certain days and certain hours.

HVRP grantees should determine beforehand who from the organization would be the best representative at the Stand Down event. Usually, the job developers or case managers (often called Employment Counselors, Workforce Coordinators, or Employment Specialists) will participate in the Stand Down because of their direct knowledge of the program services and because they are usually veterans, sometimes former HVRP and Stand Down participants.

HVRP grantees can play several roles in Stand Down Events

Main coordinating entity and applicant for funds. A grantee can be the primary coordinating entity that applies for funding through DOL-VETS.

Planning committee member. A grantee can serve on the coordinating committee or be in charge of coordinating employment and training services at a Stand Down being coordinated by another entity that has applied on its own for Stand Down funds.

Employment services coordinator. If an HVRP grantee already hosts its own Stand Down, it should still be invited to participate in an event in its service area.

Service delivery partner during Stand Down. The grantee should be provided with a table or booth to educate participants about its services and should serve as a referral source for veterans who may be employment ready following Stand Down.

Referral source following Stand Down. The grantee should be provided with a table or booth to educate participants about its services and should serve as a referral source for veterans who may be employment ready following Stand Down.

Training partner for new Stand Down developers. More experienced HVRP grantees can provide training and guidance to new events as trainers and consultants.

Connecting Participants in Stand Down to HVRP

Stand Down experts connected to HVRP grants emphasized that HVRP staff members can often serve as full partners during the event, beyond what they might do at their table. Although the first purpose of Stand Down is not to connect the veterans who attend to immediate job openings, there is wide recognition that the work of Stand Down—fostering rapport and community, addressing basic needs, resolving legal issues—helps begin the process of removing significant and varied barriers to employment. HVRP grantees in local communities provide the link between that first step of coming to Stand Down with the ultimate goals of independent employment, sustainable housing, and a renewed connectivity to the wider community.

Experts repeated that Stand Down serves as a visual reminder that the veteran is central to the process, and his needs and intentions should dictate the flow of services. The structure of Stand Down itself, even in its myriad forms around the country, mirrors this purpose. The veteran may visit various booths and learn about services as he collects various basic needs items. As he learns more and engages with the providers, he gains the power to choose his level of engagement and buy-in.

HVRP grantees in local communities provide the link between the homeless veterans' first step of coming to Stand Down with their ultimate goals of independent employment, sustainable housing, and a renewed connectivity to the wider community.

Fostering this relationship means engaging in a person-centered approach. As explained by one expert, directing someone in need of care to a specific individual has a more profound and connecting impact than directing them to a faceless service. Because HVRP grantees are experts at connecting homeless veterans to a full range of services and they are usually familiar with the individuals working at various partner agencies, they are an asset at Stand

Down. They can provide informed guidance to individuals when a veteran chooses to request a service. Some Stand Down organizers require that HVRP staff do more than stay at their table for employment services in order to integrate them fully in the Stand Down activities. In some locations, they are put in charge of the registra-

tion desk. This assignment can serve as a great outreach tool for the HVRP program and provide the veterans with a friendly, recognizable face for follow-up employment services.

For HVRP grantees, the Stand Down event itself serves as an important outreach tool for the HVRP staff members, allowing them to engage with veterans and other service providers. HVRP grantees are engaged in outreach events throughout the year, both directly to the homeless veterans where they are and to the providers in the community who provide critical services. Community education events, project orientation workshops, and distribution of HVRP materials are ongoing, but at Stand Down the HVRP grantee connects to their partners through direct service.

This on the ground collaboration adds an extra layer of depth to partnerships, and the veterans accessing services are the beneficiaries of this streamlined, informed service delivery system.

Beyond outreach, the connections between the HVRP program and the Stand Down event participants and organizers should be ongoing throughout the year and not only at Stand Down. Engagement does not end when Stand Down tents come down. For HVRP programs with drop-in centers, for example, the Stand Down serves as an opportunity to inform veterans of these resources. Having a set Stand Down follow-up day or week following the event reinforces the community that the veteran experienced at Stand Down because he knows he is likely to see individuals, both veterans and HVRP staff members, whom he met at Stand Down. This added layer of comfort supports the likelihood that the veteran will engage in follow-up after Stand Down.

Stand Down provides a forum for education on what the HVRP program can do with the veteran. Skepticism of a “free program” is likely, so Stand Down allows the staff members to show the veteran that coming to a follow-up appointment the next week begins a mutual process with opportunity, but also hard work. The HVRP grantee can explain that the program has no cost, but that together the program staff and the veteran can work to find and secure stable employment. As stated by one expert: “The [Stand Down] event is giving a fish. Our [HVRP] teaches how to fish.”

Many programs will cross-promote their activities throughout the year. HVRP grantees distributing materials on the HVRP’s services will also include information about the Stand Down. Stand Down organizers distributing pamphlets or business cards with Stand Down information in the lead-up to the event will also include contact information for the HVRP on the cards for veterans who want to initiate contact in advance. Business cards have been extremely useful for this purpose, as they are smaller, less expensive, and more durable than fliers; veterans can keep the cards with the date, time and location of Stand Down in their pocket for months. Some keep them all year long or pass them along to other veterans who might not be aware of services through HVRP or at Stand Down.

Sometimes, veterans at Stand Down are ready to start the process of returning to work that day. As stated by one expert, “Stand Down is not designed to put people to work, but we have employment programs and HVRPs at Stand Down to provide services in the event that veterans are ready, and to let veterans access those services.” Again, the veteran is given the power of choice and the support to engage with services on a gradual basis depending on his comfort level. The Stand Down event reinforces the connectivity between the veteran and the staff members of the HVRP program to support future engagement.

Connecting Attendees to American Job Center Resources

The engagement with HVRP grantees at Stand Down can assist the veterans in making initial contact with employment services and the wider community of resources to address barriers to employment. Complementing



and reinforcing this connection are the American Job Center staff, primarily Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs). Where no HVRP grantee exists in the area, these LVERs and DVOPs can serve as the main connection point to continued employment services for veterans at Stand Down.



The DVOPs and LVERs at Stand Down serve in a similar role to the HVRP grantees. They conduct outreach through Stand Down to educate veterans on their services, and they often can work with the veterans to schedule follow-up appointments at their offices in the weeks after Stand Down. While direct employment services are often not conducted at Stand Down, this forum serves as another avenue to connect a service to a recognizable face, reinforcing the momentum toward accessing employment services after Stand Down.

Experts shared their insights on connectivity to AJC by outlining their processes for developing a strong relationship with it, engaging in mutual referrals and integrating the AJC before, during, and after Stand Down. As with many programs, the connection between AJCs and Stand Downs are not without challenges.

A successful relationship with DVOPs and LVERs requires a long-term engagement. Expert Stand Down developers have had American Job Center (AJC) staff members at the table for planning, strategizing, and execution of Stand Down for many years, some over 12 years. For those experts with HVRP grants, the initial contact with the AJC was conducted through the HVRP program. After this initial contact and development of a working relationship between the AJC and the HVRP, the AJC was integrated into Stand Down. For those Stand Down organizers without HVRP grantees, engagement with the AJC staff started early. Recognizing the important role that employment plays in achieving stability, these organizers reached out to AJC staff as soon as they began operating in the service area.

The relationship with AJC staff members is maintained in several critical ways. Most programs engage in ongoing mutual referrals before, during, and after Stand Down. This process is assisted when Stand Down organizers have HVRP grants to continue employment services throughout the year. The constant communication and exchange of clients is sometimes formalized through weekly case meetings reinforced by regular phone calls and e-mails when needed.

Experts have several successful processes for supporting mutual referrals. At a basic level, AJC staff members are present at Stand Down and receive referrals to their tables as requests are made by the veterans in attendance for employment and training assistance. For those Stand Down events with a checklist, visiting the employment services area can be included as a required activity. Using this process, the AJC is placed within a service area along with housing representatives and medical/mental health providers prior to receiving clothing and hygiene hand-outs. Shared electronic filing systems have been developed at some sites to further integrate the sharing of information obtained at and after Stand Down.

Before and during Stand Down, the DVOPs and LVERs can participate in Stand Down planning committees, especially when committees are broken down into service areas including employment. Stand Down experts added that they have found more success keeping employment services within the area reserved for service providers instead of breaking employment services into its own service area. By keeping employment services as one of the many supportive services, the Stand Down event reinforces that employment is a critical component of the service delivery process.

Following Stand Down, co-location reinforces the relationship and provides a seamless connectivity between the veterans at Stand Down and the AJC. This works two ways: the DVOP co-located at an HVRP site will be encouraged to participate in Stand Down as a member of the team, and a DVOP attending Stand Down will develop a stronger relationship with the Stand Down organizers, adding support to efforts for co-location following the event. Sometimes, a DVOP is located at an HVRP site full time, while at other sites he shares an office and holds office hours for a few hours a week. This arrangement depends on the capacity of the HVRP as well as the overall caseload of the DVOP. Again, shared electronic filing systems can assist the DVOP in making the case for co-location with HVRP following Stand Down. When shared electronic systems are not available, the HVRP should make an effort to supply the DVOP with internet access so he can use his state-issued computer while on site.

“The [Stand Down] event is giving a fish. Our [HVRP] teaches how to fish.”

Successful integration of AJC resources at and after Stand Down is not without its challenges. Funding cuts and an inability to keep up with staff turnover means large caseloads for DVOPs and LVERs. Large caseloads and travel restrictions can keep AJC staff members from participating in Stand Down or visiting HVRP sites on a regular basis after the event. In a challenging economic environment, already overburdened DVOPs and LVERs face increasing numbers of unemployment claims and client needs, making them less able to fully invest themselves in the more complicated service delivery process for veterans experiencing homelessness. All experts praised the AJC staff members for their hard work and dedication, yet noted that they are not always able to deliver on their anticipated schedules due to these large caseload demands.

Connection to VA Medical Center

Experienced Stand Down organizers work closely with the VA Medical Center. In addition to being a requirement of the DOL-VETS Stand Down funding, connection to the VA Medical Center also allows the Stand Down organizers to offer at least initial screening for benefits and medical services at Stand Down. Some programs may also be able to access financial support for Stand Down from their Medical Center. Not all Stand Down organizers are able or willing to work with their partners at the VA Medical Center, but failing to do so puts the event at a significant disadvantage given the restrictions it puts on funding availability and services for veterans.



As with all partnerships, the relationship with the local VA Medical Center requires a time investment and the mutual recognition of strengths, with the service to the veteran remaining at the center of service planning. Like grantee sites, VA Medical Centers have staff turnover, offering continuous opportunities to reconnect and educate on services. Stand Down organizers can engage successfully with their partners at the VA by planning early, showcasing mutual benefits, highlighting connected services, and using HVRP as a continuous access point. This relationship is not without challenges. However, employing these proven strategies can assist Stand Down organizers in more successfully integrating VA services at and following Stand Down.

When asked what action creates the most immediate impact with VA partners, nearly all Stand Down experts mentioned starting early. Even when an event is held on the same day every year, the Stand Down organizer

Stand Down organizers can engage successfully with their partners at the VA by:

- Planning early
- Showcasing mutual benefits
- Highlighting connected services
- Using HVRP as a continuous access point

should be sure to communicate this date and time in a request to the VA Medical Center. The VA staff will likely need to use this formal request to secure approval for their involvement, which could take some time to process. Many experts reported that this is an event that the VA staff look forward to all year. The formal request serves as a reminder that their involvement is appreciated. For events that are not held every year, the organizers suggest contacting the VA staff as soon as the event is scheduled. This process helps when the VA Medical Center staff has turnover and, as one provider stated, the organizer will have to “teach them the face” of the event.

Successful Stand Down organizers suggest sharing responsibility for planning with VA partners from the beginning stages of planning. Some sites will have the VA host the event or will co-host the event, especially when the event is located on the VA Medical Center campus. When planning committees are broken down by services, the VA staff can take the lead in coordinating some services. VA staff should be invited to planning meetings to give them a voice in planning services and to inform their requests for VA’s participation in the event. Be sure to include the VA staff on reminder e-mails to the community or partners, volunteers, and donors and send thank-you notes or cards after big meetings or after Stand Down.

When submitting a request, Stand Down organizers should be very clear in the services and staff they are hoping will attend. The VA Medical Center may be able to send their Homeless Programs staff, medical providers, and/or benefits processing support staff. If an organizer works with the Medical Center in advance, they are more likely to secure the support for these services at Stand Down.

Even for programs that have hosted Stand Down for many years, arranging for medical services at Stand Down creates several logistics hurdles. Starting a year in advance is normal and encouraged to begin the approval process. Organizers should try to secure support for medical, dental, benefit and optometry services, which cannot be paid for through HVRP Stand Down support.

They may also request that the OIF/OEF Coordinator, Female Veteran Coordinator, HUD-VASH Liaison, and/or GPD Liaison attend as well. Whenever possible, organizers should attempt to secure attendance from suicide prevention staff and medical staff that can provide immunizations and HIV and Hepatitis testing. One program reported that veterans who did HIV testing were three times as likely to get their results as those who did the screening at the hospital. By having the doctors on site, they have been able to intervene in a medical emergency. Securing this wide range of services can be challenging, but it is possible.

Highlighting the mutual benefit on behalf of the veterans being served can provide justification for provision of these services. Having VA staff on site allows the Medical Center to engage with their service provider partners and VA grantees, including GPD and SSVF grantees, to see firsthand how services are delivered. This on-the-ground experience allows the VA staff to make informed referrals to resources in the community throughout the year. Even medical staff can benefit greatly from this knowledge and will be thankful to know they can make a reliable referral to a veteran in crisis.

By engaging directly with veterans, the VA staff make significant inroads into a homeless veteran community that might otherwise become or remain skeptical of VA services. Especially for older veterans, this skepticism can often prevent the veterans from accessing VA care



under normal circumstances. By being part of a service team next to the community providers, the VA staff members earn additional credibility and trust from the veterans at Stand Down. Organizers should emphasize in meetings with VA that all veteran participants at Stand Down will be encouraged to sign up with the VA Medical Center. Some programs make this sign-up part of their initial program intake, especially if they do pre-registration.



Related to the recognition of mutual benefit is the showcasing of coordinated services. Programs with GPD grants can make the case that VA involvement in Stand Down improves the productivity of the GPD program by expediting eligibility for veterans in need of GPD services. Many VA Medical Center Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRCs) are supported by Stand Down organizers who advertise their event at the CRRC and refer veterans to the CRRC while at Stand Down. This process reinforces connection with the VA Medical Center, using the CRRC's resources as an access point to educate on Stand Down and VA services.

Stand Down organizers with HVRP grants can utilize this resource to reinforce their strong relationship with VA throughout the year. By no coincidence, the interviewed Stand Down experts with HVRP have a close working relationship with the VA Medical Center staff to coordinate outreach, intake, assessment, services, housing, and follow-up, among other activities. When the VA homeless programs staff are working with HVRP case managers in weekly meetings, monthly phone calls, or e-mail updates, Stand Down updates on anticipated numbers, service needs, and other planning logistics can be shared as well. Often, both VA and HVRP staff members will serve on various veterans' services committees and councils within the community, included within the Continuum of Care. These meetings provide additional opportunities to meet and coordinate logistics, or at least maintain the relationship and share any staff changes. One program even invites the VA staff to all internal staff meetings.

The relationship with VA can sometimes be challenging. In addition to the need to start very early in planning to secure approval of various services at Stand Down, organizers should prepare for other possible roadblocks. Organizers should try to coordinate with the VA if the VA hosts or is interested in hosting its own one-day resource fair for homeless veterans. Instead of being a competing event, these can be complementary events taking

place at different times of the year, allowing homeless veterans to remain engaged throughout the year with providers.



Recent staffing changes at the VA Medical Center can sometimes create confusion for Stand Down organizers. These staffing changes include the creation of new positions as well as vacancies due to staff turnover. Stand Down organizers that work year round, especially those with HVRP grants, can benefit from the creation and maintenance of a check-in spreadsheet to be updated every quarter with any staff changes at VA.

To Engage with New Partners

- Speak with as many agencies, organizations, and businesses as possible.
- Develop a coherent pitch for Stand Down so that partners have actionable guidance on ways they may help.
- Keep initial meetings simple and make sure potential partners understand:
 - The goods and services they provide must be free to the veteran.
 - The veteran must be able to maintain integrity and anonymity while receiving the good.
- Clearly articulate the purpose of Stand Down and its role as a veteran's first step in accepting a hand up.
- If you must turn down offers from potential partners, create strategies to turn their offers down without ostracizing them so you can maintain a friendly relationship for possible future events.
 - If possible, redirect the partner's enthusiasm into activities that will be beneficial to veterans.
- Leave contact information with potential partners (e.g. a business card, flier, etc.) so they may be reminded of their ability to be an asset to veterans in crisis.

Each VA Medical Center is given the discretion to fund up to \$3,000 per day for up to three days for a Stand Down event. Several events can leverage this funding to have the VA pay for rental of space, tables/chairs, registration supplies, and other necessary items. The process for receiving and using this funding is considerably different from applying for DOL-VETS support for Stand Down. Because this funding comes through the VA Medical Center itself, Stand Down organizers need to work closely with their Medical Center to find out if this funding is accessible in their location and what it can be used to cover. Experts emphasize that this funding process can be complicated and the process is different for each Medical Center.

The relationship with VA can sometimes develop differently than originally anticipated by the Stand Down organizer, so flexibility is encouraged. Organizers that have been reticent to host Stand Down on the VA campus have changed their minds when the VA is able to offer the ample parking that other sites may not have. The VA might not be able to offer medical services for certain reasons, but they may offer clothing, free flu shots, backpacks, blankets, water, and other goods and services. One provider, due to its close proximity to several medical and dental associations and the military community, was able to leverage these relationships to create a VA-Navy provided medical care system at Stand Down. Organizers encourage this flexibility and openness to working with VA partners, even when challenges emerge.

Connection to Other Service Providers

The true success of Stand Down events is in the full integration of partners from the community. Not every partner needs to be a direct service provider to homeless veterans, or even an expert on veteran issues, but they need to be able to contribute services in a meaningful way while keeping the veteran, not the partner, in focus.

As offered by one experienced organizer: "If you only want to meet, feed, and clothe the vets(only a few of whom will be un-served homeless), and to have them walk from table to table talking to different agencies to see what's available, then that's easy to do." Developing a community and culture around Stand Down, however, means involving the right partners who buy into the purpose of Stand Down.

Engaging with New Partners

Experts offered several strategies for engaging in and maintaining partnerships. These strategies include providing targeted education to a wide range of possible providers, creating a diplomatic way to say "no" to some providers and developing practical ways to redirect enthusiasm. To illustrate these partnerships, the Stand Down experts provided insights on how they create partnerships that offer benefits assistance, housing, legal services, child care services, and other emergency supplies.

Successful organizers suggest speaking with as many agencies and businesses as possible, since no one person can anticipate what potential

offers can be developed through this heartfelt outreach. However, as with job development for HVRP, having a developed “pitch” for Stand Down is critical to ensuring that potential partners have actionable guidance on how they could help. One organizer suggested that all meetings should be simple, standard and focused on educating possible partners on the purpose of Stand Down.

For some partners, like community development boards, urban planning agencies, or business owners, the statement should emphasize that Stand Down provides services to help homeless veterans meet their immediate needs, get access to their benefits and employment services, and get off the streets. For other partners, including other service agencies and veteran-owned businesses, the statement should focus on the community created by Stand Down that allows homeless individuals to begin the process of regaining dignity and finding their role in the larger community.

Irrespective of the wording used in initial meetings with partners, a few principles should be maintained: if the partner is going to offer a service to the veterans, the service needs to be free to the veteran and must maintain integrity and anonymity. This means that potential partners offering discounted products, training, surveys, trials, or questionnaires are likely not good fits for Stand Down.

In these instances, the Stand Down organizer must create strategies for saying “no” that do not ostracize a possible future partner. While the partner may only be able to offer a reduced cost product now, with the right handling of the situation, that partner may be able to provide a useful product at no cost by the time of the event or in future years. Stand Down organizers should explain honestly that veterans at Stand Down are taking a first step toward accepting a hand up, and that meeting basic needs will need to come before making choices on purchases when they are able to secure income.

Be sure to leave Stand Down information with these partners, as a flier or business card can serve as a continuous reminder that they could be an asset to veterans in crisis. The organizer can also emphasize that anonymity and privacy is critical to establishing rapport with veterans at Stand Down, which precludes the event’s ability to allow for training, trials, or surveys that might create skepticism.

While a potential partner’s initial offer may not be a good fit for Stand Down, there are often ways to redirect their enthusiasm into beneficial activities. Organizers should aim to identify what assets the potential partner can contribute to develop a clear mission. As stated by one program, “as long as they still have a clear mission, they will stay engaged. People don’t know what they might want to do until they know the options that exist.”

Tips from the Experts

Benefits

“We have a whole team who does benefits. Both our County VSOs and VA Regional Office do benefits processing. They also sign people up for e-benefits and verify veteran status online.”

“We decided, in coordination with the VA staff, that we would not do pre-registration. Instead, if the veteran does not have a DD214 or ID, the VA staff or Stand Down staff members can look up the veteran’s social security number SSN to verify veteran status and begin the benefits processing on site.”

“We have several partners within the VSO community that help with VA benefits processing. AL, DAV, VVA, and VFW all come out to help with benefits. We also have the Social Security Administration and the IRS on site to help with other benefits and tax issues.”

Housing

“We have all local shelters, housing providers, Goodwill’s Permanent Supportive Housing, and the VA HUD-VASH providers at the Stand Down.”

“We try to have all housing providers in the area, (U.S.VETS, Project Aware, VA’s Domiciliary program) at the event, but with veterans in more rural areas, housing resources are often limited. We rely on the referral sources we do have that may be helpful.”

“Since we don’t do an overnight, if the veterans do not have a place to go, we set them up with a place to stay and with travel options so they can get back to us.”

Legal Services

“We have a paralegal that organizes the legal services. We usually have approximately 10 defense/prosecuting attorneys that take on cases pro-bono and work together to do plea deals.”

“We have not had successful response from judges in the area so the attorneys work together and present plea deals to a judge after the event. It seems to work well, but could be improved with more legal support from judges.

“Prairie State Legal Services, AMVets, and Legal Aid conduct workshops at the Stand Down.”

“Several years ago, we started homeless court at Stand Down after a hiatus of several years. We got everyone at the table two weeks before Stand Down, not knowing what we were doing, and we made it happen. It was chaos at first, but you just have to go for it.”

“We have judges [at Stand Down] the whole time since we do not do pre-registration and we are never really sure who will come for services. The prosecuting attorneys in the biggest counties know about the event and that they will be getting calls throughout the day about people, and other counties know usually. The volunteering defense attorneys will bargain with the prosecutors and if the prosecutor cannot respond, the judge can make a decision and give the prosecutor a period of time to respond before the judgment stands.”

When the veteran is given a sentence of community service, the veteran is told which service providers he should visit at Stand Down. He gets a card which gets signed by the different providers. Judges enjoy it because they become part of the case management process and are doing something to benefit the veteran, not giving a free pass.”

Other Emergency Supplies

“Donations are received from numerous agencies and organizations to provide either supplies or funds to purchase the supplies. These include local Rotaries, veteran service organizations, churches, and local businesses.”

“We provide food, boots/shoes, blankets, sleeping bags, clothing, hygiene kits, showers, hair cuts and much, much more.”

“The Rotary has a moving library on wheels. The bookshelves came in with a lending library, so veterans can take or return the books throughout Stand Down. Instead of having books donated, this allows the veterans to read throughout the event or take books with them, and at the end, the partner takes the entire set-up with them. This is much easier than coordinating book donations.”

“We are able to offer massage, acupuncture, and alternative medicine, and these are very popular. For us, finding the person in the community who is equipped and dedicated is the hard part because they must be certified. Sometimes, however, we can use schools and students for these services when they are coordinated by the certified provider.”

Miscellaneous

“Travel and visit other Stand Downs... this helps. It is important to get new ideas from other events, because you will get such creative ideas.”

“If possible, host your event at a large church in the area. Often, they would be honored to be involved, and they will have parking! You will be amazed at what the faith community can do for these veterans.”

“Make sure you have buy-in from Veteran Service Organizations, VA Medical Center and Regional Office, the city elements (Mayor’s Office, Housing service offices, Child Support enforcement agencies, Human service agencies), various social service organizations that provide services for homeless, non-military related businesses that can donate support, and a solid volunteer base.”

“Watch for liability issues: you MUST have security. Security teams of formerly homeless veterans may be more patient!”

“One aspect of our Stand Down that may not mean much to most people but our veterans are very appreciative of and we are proud of is that we provide a tented area with tables and chairs, with music playing throughout the day, and it’s just for eating, enjoying the evening entertainment, announcements, opening and closing ceremonies. These veterans and their families most of the time eat standing up, on the ground or on a park bench. It’s really nice for them to enjoy the comforts of shade and to be able to go sit at a table with new and old friends, have a soft drink, a snack, talk, play tables games, or just read.”

“Surveys have been helpful because we learned that our signage was bad. We had aisles in the indoor section where the flow of traffic was going behind where the service providers were seated, and one of the providers had PTSD and was uncomfortable with that set up. So we fixed that. I don’t know all of the areas of improvement, so this helps.”

“Have internet onsite if you can. This can be a challenge for an outdoor event, so think of having a ‘hub.’”