

Employment Support In VA Housing First Programs
 An Important Step in Ending Veterans Homelessness

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Homelessness Amongst Veterans

- Homelessness is the end result of problems that an individual/family cannot resolve without assistance
- Everyone deals with stressors and challenges differently
- Really no way to predict how or when a Homeless or Veteran will realize that he/ she needs help
- Research indicates that the majority of Vietnam Veterans did not request help until 8-12 years after their discharge
- Veterans are Homeless at a Higher Rate Than Their Non-Veteran Counterparts
- Veterans are Homeless Longer Than Their Non-Veteran Counterparts

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3 Major Reasons for Homelessness Amongst Veterans

- Economic Hardship; usually involve employment issues and mounting debt
- Lack of Affordable Housing; The cost of housing makes it unlikely for a single-wage earner to be able to afford a comfortable and safe rental unit
- Health Issues; up to one third of combat veterans are likely to experience some clinical degree of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other emotional/psychological difficulties directly related to their military experience (VA Iraq War Clinician Guide, 2004).

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Impact of Military Service/ Employment

- Prolonged separation from traditional support
- Highly stressful training and occupational demands
- Non-transferability of some military occupational specialties into the civilian workforce

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Obtain Steady Gainful Employment

- Many military occupational specialties during wartime – weapons specialists, munitions handlers, door gunners on helicopters and infantrymen – are not transferable to the civilian sector
- Transferable military occupations of younger veterans – warehousemen, clerical and food service workers, health care assistants and lower level workers with limited experience – are on the low end of the wage scale
- Veterans may be competing for rare employment opportunities with civilians who have more site-based training or more personal contact with potential employers and their crews or staff

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Gainful Employment At A Living Wage

- Gainful employment at a livable wage with opportunities for advancement is the foundation for maintaining economic stability and reducing the risk of homelessness
- Those who must rely solely on their own incomes to support themselves and their families, economic pressures are compounded by the difficulty of paying for and attending educational programs to improve their earning potential
- Single heads of household, the issue of paying tuition and fees is often not as prohibitive as child care and other necessary expenses associated with going back to school

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Supportive Services/ Supported Employment

- The VA Ann Arbor HUD- VA Supported Housing Program in conjunction with Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority, Lucas County Veterans Service Commission and Veteran's Matter have housed 170 Veterans Homeless Veterans in Lucas County in 2015-2016.
- The VA Ann Arbor Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program in conjunction with National Church Residence, Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority, Lucas County Veterans Service Commission and Veterans Matter have housed 75 Homeless or at Risk of Homelessness Veterans between October 2015 through December 2015
- Of the Veterans in these program, those Veterans who are able to work, 52% are working in competitive employment (FYTD16)

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Supportive Services/ Supported Employment

- VA Ann Arbor Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program partners with Neighborhood Properties Inc. for the Griffin Street Project, where our Homeless Veterans with severe mental illness receive service rich transitional housing;
- We are proud to share that 50% of employment eligible Veterans were working in competitive employment at exit from the program (FYTD16).

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Supportive Services/ Supported Employment

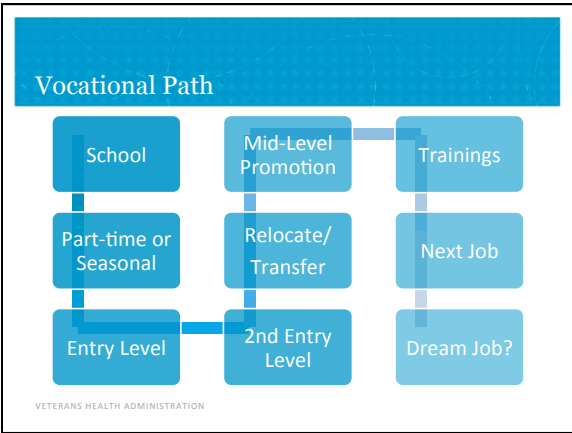
- Reaching **Functional Zero**; Any Homeless Veteran who presents in our community will have a clear path to permanent housing
- Competitive employment is key to exiting Homeless Veterans from shelter to permanent housing and maintaining that housing
- We recognize that creating employment opportunities for Homeless Veterans takes a coordinated approach where integration of evidenced based best practices are paramount to our Veterans' success (both for housing and employment)
- Supported Employment is recovery-orientated, consumer driven, empowering-using real social situations to learn from and lastly, it is individual placement and support (IPS)

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Finding Jobs for Veterans
Not Letting homelessness get in the way





Vocational Interventions

<p>Traditional Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy pre-assessment • Training, train-place philosophy • Trial work • Sheltered workshops, structure, and protection 	<p>Supported Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery-oriented • Consumer driven • Empowering, real social situations to learn from • Place-train • Individual Placement and Support (IPS)
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IPS Effectiveness

Participants achieved a mean competitive employment rate of 60%, compared to 24% receiving traditional vocational services (over 12-18 months)



(Bond, Drake, & Becker, 2008)
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Outcomes

- Over an 8-year period, the number of clients served in IPS on a quarterly basis has grown from 792-9,359.
- The number of employed quarterly has increased from 299-3,875.

Mean employment rate over 32 quarters was 47%, ranging from 38% to a peak of 55%

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Becker, Drake, & Bond, Benchmark Outcomes in Supported Employment, American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation, 2011.

Practice Principles

- 1.) Zero-Exclusion Policy
- 2.) Integrated Employment & Treatment
- 3.) Competitive Jobs
- 4.) Rapid Job-Search
- 5.) Systematic Job Development
- 6.) Time-Unlimited Support
- 7.) Consumer Preferences
- 8.) Benefits Planning

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Becker, and Drake, 2003

Zero Exclusion Criteria
All clients who want to work are eligible

- Psychiatric diagnosis
- Symptoms
- Treatment choices
- Work history
- Legal history
- Substance abuse
- Cognitive impairment
- Cognitive problems
- Missed appointments

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Integrated Employment & Treatment
Open communication between providers is vital

- SE specialist embedded on multi-disciplinary treatment teams
- Shared decision making, with the client at the center
- Getting a job is a part of treatment, and changes to service plans may be necessary

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COMPETITIVE JOBS
Integrated work settings

- Not prevocational, sheltered, or segregated work experiences
- Regular jobs in the community rather than jobs that are set aside for people with disabilities
- Don't include artificial time limits
- Pay at least minimum wage
- Same pay and benefits for everyone who holds those positions
- Part-time or full-time

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Rapid Job Search
Contact with potential employers & job exploration is conducted within the first month of referral

- No delay for training or assessment procedures
- Clients have strengths and skills to take to the job, already ready
- Demonstrates that practitioners are taking their clients' goals seriously
- Exploring jobs in the community is one way to take advantage of motivation: people get excited as they see the possibilities

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Systematic Job Development
Job search is very specific

- Developing relationships with potential employers
- Learning more about the needs and preferences of a company to "job carve"
- Applying to job postings, and following up with hiring manager in person

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Time-Unlimited Support
Individualized support for as long as needed, or desired

- Support may be emotional in nature, or troubleshooting workplace difficulties
- No set time frame limiting participation
- Job interests may evolve over time, new opportunities may be desired

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Client Preferences
Strongly influence all aspects of the job search process

- Finding a job that fits the person, NOT changing the person to fit the job
- Job search must embrace a person's values, interests, and own way of doing things
- Disclosure of illness
- What type of assistance do they want?
- VAP

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Potential Barriers



- Transportation
- Legal issues
- Work history
- Fear/anxiety
- Benefits

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STRENGTHS, GAPS AND CHALLENGES FOR HOMELESS VETERANS EMPLOYMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY



VA MISSION

Lincoln's Charge, 1865 ~

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan."

Today ~

"To care for those who shall have borne the battle, and for their families and their survivors."

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FACTS

- Department of Defense focused on training troops for war and it falls on communities to help military men and women help transition to civilian employment
- Only 17% of those that enter the service stay until retirement.
- The Veteran unemployment rate for those who served after 9/11 is 6.5 percent as opposed to 4.9 percent for all other Veterans which is similar rate for all Americans.
- As the military downsizes a renewed focus on helping Veterans find jobs.
- Two-thirds of Veterans experienced a difficult transition from military to civilian life

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FACTS

- Veterans name finding a job as the greatest challenge in transitioning
- Military Veterans are highly disciplined and highly trained.
- Veterans have trouble finding and keeping jobs and civilian employers struggle to understand them.
- Studies and data support that non-Veterans are more violent offenders than Veterans
- Some Veterans need long term support but the vast majority don't need nor want a handout, they just need a handshake.

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·Right now to me I am more scared of sitting in an interview room getting interviewed for a job, then when I had people shoot at me.”

-US Army Veteran

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Toledo Veteran Challenges to Employment

- Food, Clothing, Personal Hygiene
- Removing legal issues to include felony convictions, criminal charges, tax issues, family and child support, loss of driving privileges and consumer debt
- Geographical Opportunities and Transportation
- Physical and Mental health challenges
- Transferring military skills and training to civilian workforce or certifications

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Toledo Veteran Challenges to Employment

- Support or training for transitional challenges
- Cultural barriers – Military model of support, Veteran beliefs about employers
- Competing with candidates and education
- Veteran driven
- Telephone, Computer hardware, computer competency and internet access
- Current economic situation

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“Community collaboration has been identified as the single most effective means of enhancing the quality of and ultimate success of employment and vocational training programs and services.”

-Department of Labor National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

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GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Nearly half of all Veteran job seekers report needing “A Lot” of help

- Networking
- Skills in “closing” a job interview and Interview skills
- Targeting employers and researching companies
- Effective resume writing and writing a cover letter
- Preparing for a job interview
- Following up with interviews
- Improving transitioning support earlier

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GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Training – Post 9-11 not choosing perceived civilian vocations
- Small group training
- Veterans express strong interest in potential customized programs
- Veterans have high expectations for employer-provided support programs–this is NOT entitlement
- Education and Vocational Training
- Employer network with round table quarterly feedback meeting

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We can prevent not just treat homelessness among Veterans.

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A Community-Wide Action To End Veterans Homelessness

- Coordinated effort to connect Homeless Veterans with immediate, “right fit” employment with supported services
- Coordinated effort to place Homeless Veterans in job training programs that enhance skills and lead directly to competitive employment
- Utilization of Federal, State, County and City resources in coordination; avoiding duplication of service to provide a No Wrong Door approach to vocational and employment services
- Convene a work group of key stakeholders to create clear access to competitive employment that assures each Homeless Veteran can afford to live autonomously

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