

# Improving Employment Outcomes for Veterans Exiting Homelessness: Strategies for Successful VHA Homeless Programs and HVRP Collaboration

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

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# Panelists

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VA Boston Healthcare System

**Julia Franklin**, Outreach Specialist, Veterans Training School  
New England Center and Home for Veterans

**Dr. Kim Cook**, Executive Director  
U.S.VETS – Barber's Point (HVRP, GPD, EH, & SSVF Grantee)

**Jackie S. Nguyen**, Community Employment Coordinator (CEC)  
VA PIHCS



# Webinar Agenda

- I. General housekeeping/overview of agenda
- II. Background and Framing
- III. Community Presentations
- IV. Q & A



# Federal Perspective: Intersection of Homelessness and Employment

- **Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness**
- **Federal Actions to-date**
- **Moving Forward**



# DOL Veterans' Employment and Training Service



- **What is the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)?**
- **Goal of HVRP**
- **Importance of Partnerships**
- **Partnership Benefits**



- **What is Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCES)?**
- **Goal of HVCES**
- **Importance of Partnerships**
- **Partnership Benefits**

# BOSTON VHA & New England Center and Home for Veterans

## Charles Franklin

Community Employment Coordinator  
VA Boston Healthcare System

## Julia Franklin

Outreach Specialist, Veterans Training School  
New England Center and Home for Veterans



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# **BOSTON VHA & NECHV: Who We Serve**

## **VA Boston Community Employment Coordinator**

Any Veteran who is VA-eligible that is experiencing homelessness, or is at-risk of becoming homeless.

## **NECHV: Veterans Training School (HVRP)**

Any Veteran from any era regardless of branch, length of service, or discharge status that is experiencing homelessness or at-risk of becoming homeless.



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# BOSTON VHA & NECHV: Why Partner Together

Increase access and awareness of HVRP and VHA services while reducing redundancy:

- Access
- Communication
- Unified Support
- Holistic Support
  - Housing, Case Management, Recovery, Medical
- Continuity of Care



# Boston VHA & NECHV Collaboration

**VHA:** Providing Veterans the opportunity to obtain all available resources in an efficient manner, and allowing the variety of resources to work together and provide holistic support for the Veteran.

**NECHV:** Mutually beneficial support model that aims to address employment needs of a population that we both serve. The more we work together, the better the outcomes for our Veterans.



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# What Our Data Shows: Brockton Walk-In Clinic

Fiscal Year	Total Seen in BR WIC	Referrals to VASH	Referrals to GPD	New to VA	Referrals to SSVF	Referrals to CEC
FY 15	105	63	18	4	11	4
FY 16	133	61	12	3	15	23
FY 17	218	96	33	14	78	45



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# Boston VHA & NECHV: Our Biggest Impact

## Positive Experience for the Veteran

- Efficient Support
- Better Employment Outcomes
- Easier to Ensure Continuity of Care



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# Boston VHA & NECHV

## HOW WERE WE ABLE TO ESTABLISH A STRONG PARTNERSHIP?

- Consistency & Communication

## WHAT CHALLENGES ARE WE STILL WORKING THROUGH?

- Timing
- Financial Support for Overcoming Barriers
- Retention



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# Boston VHA & NECHV

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES:

- Don't view each other as a competitor, work together to achieve shared goal.
- Combine resources to identify gaps in services, to work towards filling those gaps.

## RESOURCES/TOOLS TO HIGHLIGHT:

- Transportation Assistance
- Clothing
- Training



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# Hawai'i Demographics



- State is made up of 7 populated islands – **1.43 million residents**
  - 989,000 live in the City and County of Honolulu
- Median family income for Honolulu is **\$96,000**
- Median family income state wide is **\$48,000**
- Minimum wage **\$10.10**
- State Unemployment rate is **1.7%**
  - Lots of available jobs in the service and hospitality industries
- Cost of living is over **187%** of the national average with housing at **298%**
- Disconnect between salaries and cost of living results in high rates of homelessness
  - **Honolulu has the highest rate per capita in the US**



# Developing a TEAM Approach



## Why we needed to do something different:

- The VA , HVRP grantees & the State JVSG all provide employment services
  - 3 HVRP grantees serving approx. 300 annually
  - 3 JVSG DVOPs serving approx. 100 annually
  - VA Homeless Employment Program serving approx. 300 annually
- Some Veterans were participants in all programs and some in only one program
- No coordination between our agencies

## We realized that to best serve our homeless Veterans we needed to coordinate our efforts:

- Initial team meeting in 2015
- Agreement to work together and leverage resources
- Process has continued to evolve and change over time



# Employment Team



## Partner Members

- US DOL/VETS Hawaii Staff
- Employers – specifically those hiring homeless Veterans
- Federal and State Housing Resources
- Veteran-focused Community Organizations
- Partner Members meet quarterly to share program initiatives

## Core Members – Case Conference Team

- VA Community Employment Coordinator
- US DOL/VETS HVRP Grantees
- US DOL/VETS JVSG Grantee State of Hawaii State DLIR DVOPS & LVER
- VA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- Core Members meet monthly as an Employment Case Conference Team



# Employment Case Conference



## Objectives

- Promote team development, effective collaboration, and closer working relationships
- Prevent staff splitting
- Avoid duplication of services
- Share strategies to motivate Veterans towards employment
- Decrease frustration and burnout
- Empower each other and our clients
- Share ideas and encourage thinking outside the box



# Confidentiality



- Release of Information (ROI) must be obtained from each Veteran during the intake process
- Universal ROI – New format for employment staff to use to talk to employers and other employment staff about Veteran's employment goals/interests.
- If Veteran does not agree to Universal ROI, we use the old ROI for a specific agency or employer.



# Employment Barrier Discussions



- Difficult to engage Veterans (e.g. low motivation, etc.)
- Criminal Background (e.g. self and community stigma, etc.)
- Medical/Mental Health Issues
- Veterans on disability income who want employment (e.g. SSI, SSDI, VBA benefits, etc.)
- Substance Use
- Cultural and diversity issues



# What We've Learned



- **Developing Strong Partnerships Requires:**

- Constant & Transparent Communication
- Philosophy: Our Success is Tied to Each Other
- Accountability & Ownership of Each Part in the System

- **Additional Areas of Opportunity For Us Include:**

- Leveraging More Resources to Assist with Employment Barriers – Bringing More People to the Table
- Developing Creative Strategies for Exposing Employers to our Veterans



# Recommendations For Other Communities



- Educate & evaluate each partner's strengths and areas of opportunity in order to maximize efficiency
- Identify the gaps in the system early on in the process and commit to continue working towards addressing those gaps
- Have the difficult discussions
- Hold each other accountable to outcomes that each party commits to
- Celebrate the little & big wins



# Questions?



# Additional Resources

- <https://www.usich.gov/solutions/jobs>
- <https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/partnerships-for-opening-doors-summit>
- <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/HVCES.asp>
- <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/cec-contacts.asp>
- <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/index.asp>
- [https://www.va.gov/homeless/get\\_involved.asp](https://www.va.gov/homeless/get_involved.asp)
- <https://www.dol.gov/vets/>
- <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/employment/>
- [Heartland Alliance Report on October 2017 Summit](#)



# Additional Resources

- <https://www.veterans.gov/>
- <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/local-help.aspx>
- <https://www.careeronestop.org/Veterans/default.aspx>
- <https://www.nvtac.org/>



# Thank you!

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