

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOMELESSNESS

- According to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness website (www.usich.gov), unemployment is cited as the third leading cause of homelessness in the United States.
- The U.S. Department of Labor publication: Employment Assistance Guide for Service Providers Helping Homeless Veterans states: “Unemployment and underemployment are two of the most critical issues affecting homeless veterans... Studies show that gainful employment at a livable wage, with opportunities for advancement, is the foundation for maintaining economic stability and reducing the risk of becoming homeless.”



WHY PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO HOMELESS VETERANS?

- Employment provides:
 - Income that is key to economic well-being and builds skills for future well-being.
 - Greater social interaction and connections that can reduce isolation and build social capital.
 - A valued social role.
 - A sense of personal efficacy and social integration that contributes to life satisfaction.
 - Greater life satisfaction and better adjustment than do people who are not employed.
- As a result, employment is likely to result in decreases in substance use and improvements in mental health.
- **Working enhances housing stability.**



UNEMPLOYMENT INCREASES SUICIDE RISK

- Unemployment becomes a greater risk factor for suicide as a worker ages.
- Suicide risk increases the longer a person is unemployed, with risk likely peaking within the first five (5) years following job loss.
- The probability of suicidal ideation and attempts increases significantly with the presence of financial strain indicators (i.e., unemployment, financial debt or crisis, past homelessness, and lower income).



HVCES MISSION

To provide employment services and resources to Veterans participating in Veterans Health Administration (VHA) homeless programs in order to increase access to permanent housing and improve housing stability. This is accomplished both through the provision of direct services and by providing a bridge to employment opportunities and resources in the local community.



HVCES STAFFING

- HVCES is staffed by Vocational Development Specialists who function as:
 - Community Employment Coordinators (CEC) funded at almost all VAMCs.
 - Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) and Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Employment Specialists that are funded at a limited number of VAMCs based on local needs.
 - 21 funded HCHV Employment Specialists
 - 68 funded HUD-VASH Employment Specialists



THE ROLE OF THE CEC

- To coordinate with VA and non-VA partners to develop strategies to augment existing employment services and reduce barriers, as needed.
- To build a direct communication bridge between staff and community programs and employers.
- To provide consultation and training regarding the importance of work and employment options for Veterans receiving homeless program services.



HCHV AND HUD-VASH EMPLOYMENT SPECIALISTS

- HCHV Employment Specialists are imbedded in HCHV teams and may be located in a variety of settings which provide services to homeless Veterans.
- HCHV Employment Specialists may be assigned to a primary location such as a Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC) or Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), or to a specific team.
- HUD-VASH Employment Specialists are imbedded within HUD-VASH teams and provide direct services to Veterans participating in HUD-VASH.



WHAT HVCES IS NOT

- HVCES is not a discrete program.
- There are no eligibility requirements for Veterans to receive assistance from HVCES other than participation in a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) homeless program.
- HVCES is not exactly the same across sites:
 - Staff ensure a range of employment services are accessible to Veterans who have experienced homelessness based on site-specific needs and resources.



MOVING FORWARD

- Providing virtual employment services in addition to face-to-face.
- Collaboration with community partners.
- Continued coordination with Department of Labor (DOL) and State Workforce Boards.
 - In particular, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)



RESOURCES

- Locate HVCES staff

<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/HVCES.asp>

- Success Stories

<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/84255/albert-alexander-va-helped-secure-housing-economic-stability-family/>



QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFORMATION



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<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/cec-contacts.asp>