

Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program

Best Practice Profiles of Employment Assistance Programs

Produced by



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Through a grant from the

U.S. Department of Labor
Veterans' Employment and Training Service
200 Constitution Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20210
202-693-4700

— July 2004 —

Introduction

This publication was produced by the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). It contains profiles of some of the nation's most effective homeless veteran employment assistance programs, and is designed to inform community-based organizations and government agencies about the essential components of a comprehensive program that can be replicated and can successfully compete for federal grants. All of the organizations highlighted in this work receive grants under the DOL-VETS Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, and most have served as guideposts for other community-based homeless service providers that have developed employment assistance programs.

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is the only federal program wholly dedicated to providing employment assistance to homeless veterans. HVRP is funded by DOL-VETS in compliance with the requirements of 38 United States Code, Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Section 2021 requires the Secretary of Labor to conduct, directly or through grant or contract, such programs as the Secretary determines appropriate to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force.

HVRP programs fill a special need because they serve veterans who may be shunned by other programs and services because of problems such as severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), long histories of substance abuse, serious psychosocial problems, legal issues, and those who are HIV-positive. These veterans require more time-consuming, specialized, intensive assessment, referrals and counseling than is possible in other programs that work with veterans seeking employment.

The employment focus of HVRP distinguishes it from most other programs for the homeless, which concentrate on more immediate needs such as emergency shelter, food and substance abuse treatment. While these are critical components of any homeless program, and grantees are required to demonstrate that their clients' needs in those areas are met, the objective of HVRP programs is to enable homeless veterans to secure and keep jobs that will allow them to re-enter mainstream society as productive citizens.

In FY 1996 and 1997, HVRP received no funding from Congress. In FY 1998, Congress authorized \$3 million for the program. In FY 2000, through a competitive application process, DOL-VETS awarded 43 urban HVRP grants and 11 non-urban grants to community-based organizations and

Historical Funding of HVRP Program	
Fiscal Year	Amount <i>In millions</i>
1996	\$0
1997	\$0
1998	\$3.0
1999	\$3.0
2000	\$9.5
2001	\$16.9
2002	\$17.9
2003	\$17.7
2004	\$19.0

government agencies to provide employment and other supportive services to more than 7,800 homeless veterans at a cost of more than \$9.5 million.

The following year, more than \$16.9 million was allocated to fund 42 urban and 11 non-urban second-year grants, while an additional 27 urban grants were added to the list. That year, more than 14,150 homeless veterans received employment assistance and supportive services through the program.

During FY 2002 and 2003, a combined \$35.62 million in HVRP grants were awarded to fund 62 and 43 programs, respectively, offering employment and supportive services to more than 28,000 homeless veterans. The average cost per job placement reported by grantees in FY 2003 was \$2,040, lower than the \$2,308 reported in FY 2000; and the FY 2003 successful job placement rate of 68% was substantially higher than the 53% reported in FY 2000.

Methodology

NCHV announced the HVRP Best Practices Project after it secured a technical assistance grant through the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service in August 2003. Questionnaires were then mailed to community-based organizations and government agencies that expressed an interest in being considered for participation in the project.

Because of the objectives of the project – to inform service providers about HVRP, the essential components of an employment assistance program, and the competitive grant process – we sought to include representative programs from both urban and rural areas, faith-based and community-based organizations, large and small operations, and government agencies that serve as community service network centers.

Once the participants were selected, information from the questionnaires, follow-up interviews and reports to the Department of Labor was used to compile the program profiles. Organizations and agencies that were selected for inclusion in the project received a \$500 stipend to offset the administrative cost of their participation.

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Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Best Practices Project

Executive Summary

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) Best Practices Project was made possible through a partnership between the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) and the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). The objective of the project is to present profiles of successful homeless veteran employment assistance programs funded by DOL-VETS as an information and development resource for community and faith-based organizations and government entities that are planning to implement such programs, or are exploring ways to enhance the programs they already administer.

Compiling the 21 profiles presented in this report required nearly a year of information gathering through questionnaires, interviews and research. Great care was exercised to ensure the inclusion of programs representing the full range of program types – urban, rural, faith-based and community-based organizations, local projects, regional networks, and public agency homeless veteran service providers.

Critical Universal Program Components

Though the geopolitical locations, organizational structure and populations served by these programs vary widely, there are several critical components that are shared by all HVRP employment assistance programs:

Community Collaboration – The HVRP program is designed to serve homeless veterans facing a multitude of barriers to employment, and client needs most often include the entire continuum of care: immediate access to emergency shelter, food, clothing, personal hygiene facilities, medical care, dental care, mental health assessment and services, transitional housing, transportation assistance, personal development counseling, legal aid, and employment readiness and placement services. No single organization or government agency can provide all of these services. Successful HVRP programs enter into contracts or detailed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with local government agencies and community and faith-based service providers to support their employment assistance programs. To their credit, none of the participating organizations in this study dwelled on the importance of these MOUs when competing for and securing federal program grants, even though that is certainly the reality. **However, all of them identified network collaboration as the single most effective means of enhancing the quality of services provided by their programs.**

Comprehensive Assessments and Reports – All HVRP programs utilize client intake assessments and progress reports to identify individual needs and to develop practical individual performance plans. These documents identify the services that are needed to ensure the success of each client. But they also serve as critical planning tools, charting the organization's dependence on the services provided by its partners and the degree to which clients' needs are being met. This information was identified as a critical element

in the planning process and continuous development of even the most experienced HVRP programs. More detailed assessments yield the most valuable client assistance and case management plans. Diligent client progress and outcomes reporting attest to the program's success, while certifying the need for available services and the need to expand those services. This information is useful not only for HVRP and internal management purposes, but for participation in Continuum of Care planning and submitting applications for other federal grant programs.

Developing Employment Opportunities – It may seem like stating the obvious, but there is a tremendous difference between preparing someone for the workforce and actually ensuring homeless veteran clients secure gainful employment. Successfully navigating through the immediate barriers to employment – homelessness, poverty, need for vocational training, legal problems and disabilities – is only the beginning. Approaching a potential employer with clients who have compromised work and personal histories is, at best, a herculean challenge. All of the HVRP programs featured in this project ensure success by creating job opportunities for their clients. In some cases, it is through cooperative agreements with local businesses or through subsidized employment and training programs for special needs populations. In some cases, it is through job-specific training at HVRP grantee facilities and subsequent placement, or on-the-job training facilitated by case management and employer support services. Some of the HVRP grantees in this study operate businesses that employ homeless veteran program participants directly, offering them work experience and management training they would otherwise be denied. In all cases, a considerable investment is required to ensure there are jobs for homeless veterans who are working to re-enter the workforce.

General Observations

Core Partners – The need for strong collaborative agreements has already been mentioned, but this study demonstrated a special emphasis on specific partners that are absolutely essential to the success of any homeless veteran employment program.

- Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (HVRP, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, Local Veterans Employment Representatives, on-line employment resources).
- Department of Veterans Affairs (Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services).
- Social Security Administration (SSI, SSDI, employment assistance services for disabled workers).
- Faith Community – In many communities and rural areas, these organizations provide a large percentage (if not the majority) of public assistance from private sources. National organizations – such as Volunteers of America, Salvation Army and Catholic Charities – have local programs that work within service provider networks.
- Local Continuum of Care Committees – Essential networking to identify available supportive services and to develop linkages with employers offering job opportunities for special needs populations.
- State Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services Offices.

Funding Determines Capacity, Not Quality – All of the HVRP grantees that participated in this project make an earnest effort to extend employment assistance services to as many clients as possible. Training and employment preparation services are often enhanced by program partners, but program objectives and goals are clearly stated in HVRP grant proposals based on the anticipated costs of services provided by the applicant.

A great majority of the organizations in this project reported that they accepted more clients than the number stipulated in their program plans. However, there was no discernable decline in successful employment placements that could be attributed to that extended outreach. Most often, the programs that failed to achieve projected placement goals were impacted by local economic factors, or were working with large groups of homeless veterans facing serious or multiple barriers to employment. The data seems to support what several program administrators claimed during the project: once a sound employment assistance program is developed and implemented, funding levels primarily and directly impact the number of veterans who can be helped, not the quality of the services that are provided.

HVRP's Impact on Homeless Veteran Services – All of the organizations that participated in this project offered employment assistance to homeless veterans to some degree before they received HVRP funding. Some have provided those services for more than 30 years. However, the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program has allowed community and faith-based organizations to establish employment assistance as a priority in their service delivery plans. Through this program, DOL-VETS has acknowledged that employment is the key to successful transition from homelessness to a life of self-reliance, dignity and promise.

The program fosters inter-agency and community cooperation among homeless service providers; offers supportive services and vocational training for homeless veterans; and ultimately helps veterans overcome significant barriers to employment and re-enter the workforce as productive citizens. According to some of the program administrators who participated in this project, one of the most important aspects of the HVRP program is that it *requires* successful employment placements for homeless veterans. Fulfilling that requirement necessarily enhances the performance and effectiveness of the entire organization.

New Directions Inc. Combines Drug Treatment With Innovative Job Training Program

It is estimated that 23% of all homeless individuals are veterans. One of the greatest challenges homeless veterans and their families face is drug addiction. In 1999, the Interagency Council on Homelessness published "Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve." That study found that approximately 49% of veterans had experienced problems with alcohol during the month prior to being surveyed, and that 31% had experienced problems with drugs. Approximately 1 in 10 experienced problems with both alcohol and drug abuse during the month before being surveyed. Mental health problems among homeless veterans co-occurred with substance abuse at a rate of 28% during the month prior to the survey. Drug and alcohol abuse among homeless veterans was found to be more prevalent than among homeless non-veterans.

New Directions Inc. (NDI), a Los Angeles nonprofit drug treatment center founded in 1989, knows well the need to serve homeless veterans with substance abuse challenges, a significant subgroup within the LA homeless population, estimated to number between 18,000 and 27,000.

The mission of NDI is "to provide veterans the tools they need to increase their marketable skills, an environment where they can strengthen their personal and social skills, and the opportunities to test these skills in real world working and living situations while maintaining a focus on the health and well-being of the individual." This is accomplished through a combination of drug and alcohol rehabilitation, supportive transitional housing and job training. In 2003, NDI provided supportive services to more than 760 homeless veterans.

The work of NDI was enhanced in July 2001 when the organization began a computer training program funded by a grant it received from the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP). The grant was renewed in 2002, and a new HVRP grant was approved for \$230,137 in 2003. Under New Directions' vocational program, homeless veterans who are frequently unable to access traditional employment services receive vital assistance to re-enter the workforce.

In order for homeless individuals to become self-sufficient and independent, they need to have stability in their lives, including housing, freedom from addiction, and a consistent source of income. NDI utilizes HVRP funding to prepare homeless veterans to return to the workforce. HVRP funding makes it possible for NDI staff to provide computer training and occupational skills training in culinary arts and human services.

Clients may receive job training in paid, part-time human service positions at NDI facilities, including detoxification coordinators, resident managers and service coordinators. The opportunity for veterans to offer support to other veterans helps clients believe they can succeed, and can lead to permanent employment with New Directions or other social service agencies. More than half of NDI's staff are graduates of the program.

In addition to human service industry training, New Directions maintains three other job training programs called “social enterprises,” where homeless individuals learn new skills in practical working environments. NDI provides a culinary arts program, where homeless veterans receive more than 700 hours of training and perform catering services for events throughout Los Angeles. NDI also provides a handiworker/construction services program, teaching carpentry, painting, repair and site clean-up skills. The training course includes 240 hours of classroom study followed by on-site experience.

The newest social enterprise NDI operates with the assistance of the HVRP grant is a restaurant known as the Veterans’ Village Diner. Located on the grounds of the VA West Los Angeles Healthcare Center in Brentwood, this 1950s-style diner is the result of a collaborative effort between NDI, DOL and the community. The revitalization of a preexisting canteen began after NDI partnered with a master’s level business administration class at the UCLA Anderson School of Business to create an action plan and budget. The agency was then able to secure funding from the Liberty Hill Foundation to refurbish the site and turn it into a thriving business serving the public, including VA employees at nearby facilities. The goal of all of the NDI work programs is to become successful enough to be self-sustaining, and to provide additional funding to expand agency services.

NDI believes that preparing homeless veterans with training and experience to enter the workforce, mitigating other problems including drug addiction challenges, and normalizing client social connections with family members helps them to return to a sense of stability in their lives. The veteran can then focus on future life goals with a positive outlook on life.

The Department of Labor requires all grant recipients to institute job training programs that connect with the community in unique and innovative ways and can be replicated in other places. Pat Sheppard-Flores, NDI’s Grant Proposal Writer, believes the work training program NDI has established can be successful elsewhere as long as there is strong cooperation between a lead agency, other community organizations, and small businesses so that appropriate guidance and supervision of participants is available throughout the training process.

Successful implementation of the program is measured in the third quarter of each grant year and is required for continued funding. In 2003, New Directions met or exceeded every goal it set within the HVRP grant, and the program has received funding for an additional year. The HVRP program outcomes for NDI in 2003 include the following:

HVRP Program Outcomes – FY 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Program Enrollments	95	98	103%
Vocational Assessments	120	126	105%
Educational Assessments	95	98	103%
Employment Placement	63	86	136%
Permanent housing placement	20	26	130%
Attended computer training	95	98	103%

New Directions addresses homeless veteran needs in a comprehensive, community-driven, hands-on manner. It offers clients the opportunity to control their addiction problems, to learn highly marketable skills and to rebuild their ties with their families. HVRP funding enhances NDI by making occupational skills training in human service and culinary training programs possible.

“We find HVRP funding to be critical to the core of our job training program,” said New Directions Executive Director Toni Reinis. “Last year, 22 dually diagnosed veterans were placed in permanent jobs.” NDI effectively leverages local initiatives and resources to expand services to the homeless veteran population, exemplifying how a modest amount of grant funding can be multiplied when local organizations work together. For all of these reasons, the NDI work training program is an HVRP best practice.

- For more information about the New Directions HVRP program, go to:
<http://www.newdirectionsinc.org>.

- For more information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

PATH Program Creates Innovative Social Services Mall to Help the Homeless

The shopping mall has become an American icon within our society. We flock to it to purchase consumer goods, to see movies, to take walks around miles of corridors, or to simply hang out. It's a place for families, seniors, teens – a place for everyone. It's a one-stop haven for just about all of our needs and wants.

PATH (People Assisting The Homeless) has created a new kind of American mall in Los Angeles, California. Instead of a shopping mall, however, PATH has created a service mall for people who are homeless or living in poverty. The *PATHMall* houses dozens of private and public social service agencies in suites along a modern mall corridor. There's a full-service employment agency, a substance abuse counseling and treatment center, a mental health care office, a free medical clinic, a public benefits center, community court, and even a beauty salon. If a person is living in poverty or living on the streets, this mall provides every service that she or he would need to overcome the barriers and access to permanent housing and steady employment.

PATH opened the *PATHMall* in 2002. It is a collaborative of 20 community-based organizations and government social service agencies that form a "one-stop shopping center" for homeless individuals and families. It is part of a 40,000-square-foot facility known as the PATH Regional Homeless Center. In the span of one year, the mall transforms the lives of thousands of people, providing mental health services to about 1,200 people; employment placement assistance to more than 500; health care to about 850, and free haircuts and manicures to more than 6,000.

The total operating budget of PATH is \$3.8 million (FY 03-04). The program first began in 1993, and Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) funding through the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) was approved in April 2000. During the first year of HVRP funding, the program received \$103,441, and in the subsequent years it has received \$102,000 annually. The *PATHFinders* Job Center/*PATHAcademy* program utilizes HVRP funding with a total budget of \$127,000. The program is also supported by the Department of Veteran Affairs Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program, Employees Community Foundation of Boeing Southern California; and the Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation.

Through its unique layout and design *PATHFinders/PATHAcademy* is able to offer the following services to participants:

- **Employment counseling:** Employment associates meet regularly with clients to perform individualized skills assessments, provide career counseling and provide linkages to prospective employers.
- **Job preparation workshops:** Workshops on resume-writing, interviewing techniques and dressing for success are provided.

- **Classroom training:** LAUSD instructors teach computer classes that help participants learn the necessary skills to operate Microsoft Office Suite 2000 programs, including Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Powerpoint.
- **On-the-Job Training:** Vocation training and certification are offered through CSC Certification, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, and community partners in Forklift Operation, Warehousing, Security and Maintenance.
- **Employment Resources:** The job center provides access to on-site office resources (computers, phones, fax, voice mail) for job hunting.
- **Referrals to Supportive Services:** Clients gain access to the full range of service providers located on-site in the *PATHMall*, including transitional housing, healthcare, legal assistance, benefits and personal care services.

Since the inception of the program, PATH has made several adjustments to respond to the unique service needs of its homeless veteran clients. Staff have increased their emphasis on providing training and job placement activities in specific vocations, such as security guards, forklift operation and building maintenance. They have also increased their efforts to ensure that clients are aware of and have access to on-the-job training (office managing, building maintenance) and basic computer training. These newer classes are very popular with the veterans, and have a much higher rate of enrollment than the longer, 15-week computer training course, which is often a problem for veterans who are looking for immediate employment.

These services are provided through strategic partnerships with several local organizations that offer comprehensive employment and supportive services for homeless veterans, including:

- **DVOP/LVERs** – PATH works closely with Department of Labor Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) to provide weekly specialized services to eligible veterans.
- **WIA/One-Stop** – PATH maintains a service contract with the United Auto Worker Labor Employment and Training Corporation (UAW-LETC) WorkSource Center in South Los Angeles, which is funded by the Workforce Investment Act. The contract expands employment assistance services to complement PATH's development and training programs, and often creates cross-referrals to other employment opportunities.
- **Department of Veterans Affairs** – As a Homeless Provider Grant and Per Diem Program grantee, PATH partners with the VA to provide transitional housing and linkages to supportive services for homeless veterans who come through the program and the *PATHMall*.
- **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** – The organization has maintained service contracts with HUD for more than eight years, and current grants support *PATHFinders*, the regional street outreach team; the Access Center at the Regional Homeless Center; and *PATHWays* Housing.
- **Coordination of other Resources for Homeless Veterans** – PATH offers a wealth of services beyond employment for homeless veterans. At the *PATHMall*, veterans can access more than 20 private and public service agencies, including Los

Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, CLARE Foundation, Gateways Hospital, Traveler's Aid Society and legal aid. Staff also coordinate activities with larger, national veterans service providers such as U.S. Veterans Initiative, which provides *PATHFinders* a full-time intern and service referrals for clients.

To manage these collaborations, PATH utilizes formal memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and constant communication between PATH and the personnel of participating agencies.

The unique aspect of this program is the central location of the service providers. Clients are able to walk into the mall, complete a single intake process and begin addressing all of the complex issues relating to their homelessness in one place. With this coordinated approach, each program enhances the likelihood of success of the others, thus reducing the chance that people will get frustrated or overwhelmed.

In addition to promoting longer client retention and more comprehensive care, the mall service model reduces wasteful duplication of existing services and promotes greater cost-effectiveness through shared resources, overhead and a coordinated intake process. This collaboration allows each agency to build its capacity by providing more comprehensive care with improved outcomes at a lower cost-per-service. In addition to being a convenient location for the clients, a sense of community is created around a centralized mission.

During the 2002-03 fiscal year, the program had difficulty achieving its goals. The average wage at job placement was \$8.49, with 44 employment placements. The actual goal for the year was 65, but the slow pace of the economy and the stagnant state of the job market adversely impacted the program's success. As a result, the organization created a community advisory board comprised of business owners, entrepreneurs, corporate leaders and economic development agency representatives. The board uses its professional expertise and networks to connect PATH clients to employment opportunities. This initiative has allowed PATH to greatly improve their placement goals in the current fiscal year.

Another area where there was difficulty meeting program goals was permanent housing placement. Staff discovered that most of the veterans referred to the PATH program already had access to acceptable shelter, and if they were not already housed, they were able to acquire housing at nearby shelters without too many problems. In order to assist clients who are not housed, PATH has strengthened partnerships with local agencies that place homeless veterans. They have also been successful in reserving a number of beds for veterans through PATH's housing programs.

The *PATHMall* has had considerable success moving people from homelessness to self-sufficiency, and has been able to sharing its innovative model with other communities in need. The program has been featured in national and international media. ABC World News Tonight highlighted the *PATHMall* and stated it is the only facility of its kind in the

nation. Community leaders throughout California, and representatives from Japan, Ireland and England have visited the *PATHMall* to learn more about replicating the program in their own cities.

Staff are currently engaged in developing resource and technical assistance information to help organizations replicate the social and supportive services mall model, and are close to publishing the *PATHMall Handbook*, a how-to guide for building effective community and government partnerships.

HVRP Program Outcomes – July 2002 to June 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Program Enrollments	80	106	133%
Vocational Assessments	80	106	133%
Educational Assessments	0	4	400%
Employment Placement	65	44	68%
Permanent housing placement	70	59	88%
Average wage @ placement	\$8.00	\$8.49	106%

- For more information about the PATH HVRP program, email Margaret Willis at: margaretw@epath.org.
- For information on HVRP, go to: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Swords to Plowshares Coordination of Specialized Units Allows HVRP Program to Excel

Swords to Plowshares is a community-based veterans self-help group founded in 1974 to advocate for veterans' rights and to provide direct services to veterans. Through the vets-helping-vets model, Swords works to help rebuild the shattered lives of soldiers who were once put in harm's way to serve and protect this nation. Swords' goal is to help homeless and low-income veterans through direct services and advocacy for effective public policy.

With more than 2,400 homeless veterans in San Francisco alone, Swords has been the city's most prominent agency to care for disenfranchised veterans. For those facing homelessness to substance abuse, legal issues to unemployment, Swords is there for veterans every step of the way.

Located in San Francisco, Swords is recognized and respected nationwide for its pioneering and effective work on behalf of veterans struggling with homelessness and poverty. And for more than 25 years, Swords to Plowshares has been the principal provider of employment services for homeless and low-income veterans in the San Francisco area. Swords helps homeless veterans make the transition to gainful employment by offering vocational counseling, life-skills training, resume writing assistance and job referrals. In some cases, employers who accept referrals from Swords can be reimbursed for training costs, and the organization helps those companies apply for and obtain tax credits for hiring its program participants.

Swords first received funding from the Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program in 1990 through the local Private Industry Council of San Francisco. Since then, the program has successfully competed for funding consistently, with grants ranging from \$110,000 to \$312,000. In 2003, the Swords HVRP program received \$250,000.

The program is focused on helping homeless veterans with barriers to full employment. More than 50% of its clients are impacted by substance abuse and mental health problems. More than 55% are between the ages of 45 and 61. Approximately 45% of clients are Vietnam Era Veterans. About 59% identify themselves as being part of a minority community, the largest of which is African-Americans. More than 90% of the clients are male.

Swords has a holistic approach to service delivery. In order to properly address each veteran's needs, organized "units" administer services ranging from transitional housing to comprehensive supportive services. The Residential and Community Resources unit provides transitional housing, housing assistance, assistance filing for VA benefits, and legal counseling. The Supportive Services unit provides mental health counseling and temporary housing assistance, both internally and through community service providers. The employment services team works closely with other programs offered by Swords and community-based organizations in the area to help stabilize the veteran so he or she is able to fully participate in employment and training activities. The majority of employment-related services are administered internally.

Swords' HVRP employment and supportive services include:

- Job readiness assessment
- Vocational counseling
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling
- Pre-employment counseling
- Resume development/Interview techniques
- Financial support services (transportation funds, clothing vouchers, food vouchers, tools, union dues, uniforms, etc.)
- Housing assistance
- Job search/job placement assistance
- Retention counseling
- Support groups

When the program began in 1990, Swords was a sub-contractor with the Private Industry Council, and charged with running a HVRP demonstration project. In 1993, the Swords' HVRP program received the Department of Labor grant directly and was able to nearly triple the amount of services offered to veterans.

Through the years, the organization has been able to develop collaborations with other community-based homeless service providers. These collaborations have enhanced and expanded the support available for homeless veterans. During the 10-year period from 1993 through 2003, the HVRP program has provided supportive services to more than 1,800 veterans, and helped secure jobs for more than 900. It is important to remember these numbers represent veterans who otherwise might not have had access to the broad spectrum of services needed to prepare for and gain steady employment.

Because of its links to more than 40 service providers in the San Francisco area, Swords is a "One Stop Center" providing a continuum of care with seamless service delivery, and is a certified "Access Point" in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act. The agency is electronically linked to partners offering resources that include substance abuse treatment, mental health care, permanent supportive housing, life skills training, job searches and career counseling. The San Francisco Career Link offers veterans additional testing and vocational assessment for in-depth exploration of their employment goals.

A Department of Labor Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) representative is stationed once a week at Swords' main office through an agreement with the local Employment Development Department (EDD) office. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Comprehensive Homeless Center provides case management counseling and recovery services for eligible clients. VA's Veterans Industries operates the Compensated Work Therapy program for veterans with mental illness or other serious barriers to employment, and its Vet Center conducts group counseling sessions. These programs all have reciprocal referral relationships with Swords to Plowshares.

Swords is also a charter member of the Treasure Island Homeless Development Initiative (TIHDI). In May 2000, Swords established a transitional housing program for homeless veterans at that location. The Presidio Veterans Academy provides the veteran residential community with educational and training opportunities.

Through the Private Industry Council (PIC), Swords operates on-the-job training programs for eligible veterans under the Homeless Employment Collaborative (HEC) and Title 1B of the Adult Workforce Investment Act. Swords is a member of HEC and a member of the PIC Committee of Community Agencies (CCA). The CCA actively advises the PIC on issues relating to providing job services to economically disadvantaged job seekers.

Swords is a member organization of the California Association of Veteran Service Agencies (CAVSA), a statewide association of community-based organizations providing employment and training services to veterans with significant barriers to employment, and the San Francisco Employment Committee, an EDD-sponsored group of local veteran advocacy organizations. It meets monthly to coordinate services, promote the hiring of veterans and plan the annual San Francisco Veterans Job Fair.

Swords has also partnered with Goodwill Industries and Northern California Service League in the San Francisco Training Partnership (SFTP). Homeless and disadvantaged veterans receive short-term skills training for in-demand occupations, and are then placed into training related jobs. Effective communication between Swords and area employers ensures employment opportunities are available for program participants.

General assistance benefits for eligible program participants are provided through the County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP) of the San Francisco Department of Social Services. The county’s Personal Assisted Employment Services (PAES) program also refers veterans to the Swords program.

HVRP Program Outcomes – 4th Quarter 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	100	106	106%
Total Agency Assessments	120	186	155%
Employment Placement	65	53	82%
Permanent housing placement	36	33	92%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.75	\$10.96	125%

Through its interaction with numerous government and community service organizations, a stronger voice and enhanced service network have emerged. Services and dollars are stretched more effectively through collaborative efforts. Also, the ability to provide comprehensive services in-house permits a more stable support system for the veteran, reducing the need to go to several sites to secure needed assistance.

- For more information about the Sword to Plowshares HVRP program, go to: <http://www.swords-to-plowshares.org>.
- For information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Vietnam Veterans of California HVRP and VWIP Working Together

One of the greatest challenges veterans face, especially those who are homeless, is obtaining work skills and securing employment. Without a steady income, homeless veterans enrolled in programs designed to help them re-enter society as productive, self-sufficient citizens will not succeed. Even veterans with mental and physical disabilities, those who need permanent supportive housing and other assistance, most often yearn for the added security and self-esteem gained through employment.

The Department of Labor-Veteran's Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) administers two employment assistance grant programs targeted specifically to veterans, with the prime objective of helping homeless and at-risk veterans secure and maintain gainful employment through training, supportive services and job placement programs.

Vietnam Veterans of California (VVC) utilizes funding from both programs to operate an extensive, coordinated employment assistance program for homeless veterans in Northern California. With facilities in Santa Rosa, Sacramento, Menlo Park and Eureka, VVC has maximized the benefits of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) and Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) grants it receives to provide the full range of employment services – from resume and interview preparation to job placement and follow-up case management. The organization also benefits from a state government that generously funds successful employment services programs.

Introduction to VWIP

DOL-VETS administers the program by releasing competitive Solicitations for Grant Applications (SGA) to state and local entities stipulating that proposed programs will assist eligible veterans in re-entering the workforce. VWIP grants are designed to last for 12 months and currently have a limit of \$255,000. While successful programs are able to apply for subsequent years, there is no guarantee that funding will continue. Eligible veterans include:

- Veterans with a service connected disability
- Those who have served on active duty in a war or campaign where a campaign badge was authorized
- Veterans who are recently separated from the military
- Veterans who have significant barriers to employment, which includes issues that result in or arise from homelessness.

At least 80% of the total funding of VWIP (\$7.5 million in 2003-2004) must be earmarked for the competitive grant process. State governments have traditionally been the primary applicant to the federal government for these funds. The states then publish a request for proposals (RFP) that local governments, workforce investment boards, and community organizations apply to for funding. The states provide oversight and monitoring of the approved programs and frequently provide matching funds to increase employment opportunities.

In California, for example, the state government matches the VWIP funding with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) discretionary dollars, which make up 15% of WIA funding. California is unique in that it matches the \$850,000 grant from DOL-VETS with \$6 million from the governor's discretionary portion of WIA funds. In 2003, the state was able to fund 30 local programs, the most extensive effort in the country. This almost equals the entire federal funding commitment and clearly demonstrates the state with the largest veteran population has the greatest commitment to provide employment and training services.

Through the VWIP program, VVC is able to provide additional education and vocational training support for veterans, while enhancing its considerable efforts to explore and expand employment opportunities for them. Homeless veterans who successfully complete their initial personal stabilization and employment readiness programs through HVRP benefit directly from VWIP initiatives at VVC.

VVC Homeless Veteran Employment Services

The success of the VVC employment services program depends on a highly motivated professional staff and strong collaboration among hundreds of community-based and government agency service providers across a large territory. From outreach efforts to follow-up counseling, VVC staff provide positive reinforcement and encouragement to clients who gradually learn to believe in themselves again.

As with all HVRP grantees, VVC provides the full continuum of care to help homeless veterans re-enter society as productive citizens. Outreach involves homeless care providers, VA medical clinics and hospitals, the faith community, veteran service organizations and charitable organizations throughout Northern California. Emergency shelter prior to individual needs assessments and referrals to mental health and substance abuse treatment programs are readily available. Food, clothing, transportation assistance, personal hygiene and health care are provided at all four VVC facilities or community partner organizations. When veterans fail to meet VA eligibility requirements for services, faith- and community-based organizations and state agencies step in to help.

Along with HVRP funds, VVC receives HUD funding to provide transitional housing, and transitional housing is also available to program participants at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers in Sacramento and Eureka and through the VA Grant and Per Diem program.

While adequate, diversified funding and collaboration are important to the success of all homeless and employment programs, VVC Executive Director Peter Cameron cites three other vital elements that are critical to the success of his agency: First, it is important that skilled program staff believe in what they are doing, have confidence in the support they get from the agency and demonstrate, in a non-judgmental way, their respect for the veterans they serve. Secondly, it is important that the program have an element of homeless prevention as well as intervention by identifying and mitigating the often complex and interrelated issues veterans face. Thirdly, the program needs to address and educate the larger community with the goal of effecting public policy and garnering the required resources.

The “Winning the Employment Game” program is an example of such an innovative program. Created by VVC’s Tim Hodenfield, the “game” focuses on helping individuals, many with serious barriers to employment, achieve results by providing a personalized career exploration and job-search program. Approximately 90% of “Winning the Employment Game” graduates attain jobs they want or go on to pursue higher education because of the self-esteem and confidence they gain during the two-week program. Comprehensive placement services are offered, including job preparation, assistance with resumes, information resources and interview preparation. The average wage at job placement commanded by program participants was \$13.07 per hour.

This employment preparation and placement program has been so successful, in fact, VVC has shared it with California state government agencies and other service providers working with people facing a multitude of health and personal challenges.

HVRP Program Outcomes – 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	461	555	120%
Vocational Assessments	620	750	121%
Educational Assessments	620	750	121%
Employment Placement	275	287	104%
Permanent housing placement	290	384	132%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.25	\$9.90	120%

VWIP Program Outcomes – 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	403	432	107%
Vocational Assessments	500	510	102%
Educational Assessments	500	510	102%
Employment Placement	283	315	111%
Average wage at job placement	\$9.95	\$13.03	131%

In terms of building and maintaining collaborative arrangements with service providers stretching across a vast region, few have achieved the success of VVC. The organization founded and serves on a statewide collaborative group, the California Association of Veterans Service Agencies (CAVSA). The group meets regularly to share ideas and works to maximize services for veterans. Partners who share in the successful outcomes reported by Vietnam Veterans of California include:

- U.S. Department of Labor
- Department of Veterans Affairs – VA hospitals and clinics
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Social Security Administration
- California Employment Development Department
- California Department of Rehabilitation
- Community Action Committees (all four VVC locations)
- Continuum of Care Committees (all four VVC locations)

- Colleges – Humboldt State, Foothill Community College, Sacramento Community College and Sacramento State
- Salvation Army
- Volunteers of America
- Faith Community (all four VVC locations)
- Workforce Investment Boards
- CAL Works (programs for low-income women)
- California Department of Motor Vehicles
- County Departments of Social Services
- Municipal Drug Courts
- Sacramento Housing Alliance
- Mercy Housing Coalition
- Community Food Banks

VVC has dedicated staff members who search for and develop employment opportunities for its veteran clients, and case managers contribute to that effort as time permits. They also help ensure clients have the transportation assistance they need for appointments and interviews, occasionally providing it themselves. The commitment of staff members to the veterans enrolled in VVC programs reflect the philosophy of the organization's leadership. Success is rooted in knowing the local community, demonstrating respect for veterans who need assistance, and educating the larger community on how it can help end homelessness among America's veterans.

- For more information on about Vietnam Veterans of California, go to: <http://www.vietvets.org>.
- For more information about Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service programs, go to: <http://www.dol.gov/vets>.

Volunteers of America of Kentucky and Tennessee HVRP Program is Model for Rural Areas

Not long ago, homeless veterans in Eastern Kentucky had little hope of re-entering the workforce. In 1993, Volunteers of America of Kentucky and Tennessee (VOAKT) decided to act on their belief that these men and women, who have served their country with honor, deserved a helping hand to help them return to self-sufficiency and a sense of dignity. That year the organization applied for a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VET). They received a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant of \$110,000, which allowed them to start a comprehensive employment assistance program on Veterans Day 1993. Since then, the program has provided employment to hundreds of veterans in a 17-county area in Eastern Kentucky.

The VOAKT employment assistance program, funded by HVRP and located in Pikeville, KY, is the only VOA program currently offered in this 1,800-square-mile area of rural Eastern Kentucky. It is located in an area where residents face many challenges, such as the lack of public transportation and an unemployment rate of 15%. Finding employment in this area is difficult; and when added to the burden of being homeless, it can seem hopeless.

The VOAKT HVRP staff has learned quite a bit over the last 11 years about helping homeless veterans find employment. They help homeless veterans prepare for job searches and placement, provide referrals for housing, help them apply for supportive services, and offer limited case management.

VOAKT recognizes that people trying to become stable and independent in their work life need to achieve stability in their home life as well. Alex Carroll, VOAKT staff member, says that aggressive outreach is the key to the success of the program, as veterans in the area are often isolated, lack transportation, and do not always know what supportive services are available or where to apply for them.

By providing housing for homeless veterans and connecting them with existing supportive service providers, VOAKT enhances the likelihood they can succeed in finding gainful employment. The staff constantly advocates for their clients to ensure that services are accessible and coordinated. After 10 years of service to the community, the VOAKT HVRP program has become the referral resource center for a wide range of veteran assistance projects. Staff maintain a close relationship with county social services agencies, Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Offices, the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, and the region's landlords who provide veterans with housing opportunities. Most of the coordination of local services is accomplished without formal memorandums of understanding.

The Department of Labor requires HVRP grant recipients to establish and achieve specific goals that demonstrate program success. VOAKT reported the following outcomes for its HVRP employment assistance program in fiscal year 2003:

VOA of KY & TN Outcomes – 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Participants enrolled	72	68	94%
Placed in housing	72	68	94%
Direct unsubsidized employment placements	32	34	106%
Combined placements in employment	48	48	100%
Average Hourly Wage at Placement	\$6.25	\$9.16	147%
Number Retaining Employment for 30 days	40	42	108%
Number Retaining Employment for 90 days	38	40	105%
Number Retaining Employment for 180 days	34	35	103%

One challenge to the completion of homeless assistance programs by veterans cited by VOAKT in the final quarter of FY 2003 (April to June) was the attraction of temporary work that is available during warmer months in industries like construction. Some clients are reportedly reluctant to enter the program while this short-term income is available. Efforts are ongoing to help potential clients understand the value of obtaining long-term employment rather than relying on seasonal work.

VOAKT believes that a strong focus on job retention is the key to successful program outcomes. Clients are provided with housing and other services to maximize their potential for success, which has led to an impressive number of successful long-term placements. The key to their method is a focus on assessing the specific abilities of the veteran and matching them with employers who are interested in hiring them. VOAKT facilitates this matching process, offering support, encouragement and referral services as needed.

VOAKT makes a daily effort to build on its network of partners, including local nonprofit groups, landlords, government agencies and employers. This communication helps clients overcome major barriers to employment. An example of effective collaboration is providing transportation. Some partner employers set up car pools for those that do not have vehicles. Constant communication with landlords often makes placement in housing possible for homeless veterans on the same day as their intake into the program.

VOAKT provides vital employment and supportive services to almost 70 homeless veterans a year, and achieves a successful housing and job placement rate of 94% at an average cost of \$2,205 per individual. Without the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, it is doubtful homeless veterans in this expansive, rural area would have any access to employment assistance, and little chance of regaining their self esteem and economic independence.

■ For more information about the Volunteers of America of Kentucky and Tennessee program, call 502-636-0771.

■ For more information about HVRP, go to: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training is a Military Academy with a Special Mission

The Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training (MCVET), a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation located in Baltimore, has been helping homeless veterans since its founding in 1993. On May 7, 1997, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) declared that MCVET was the “National Model” for community-based organizations providing seamless, comprehensive service delivery systems for homeless veterans.

Using a military-style social and leadership structure, and a college campus community atmosphere, MCVET today boasts a \$3 million annual budget and innovative programs that offer more than 500 formerly homeless veterans supportive services ranging from emergency shelter to permanent housing; from employment readiness and job training to steady, gainful employment in high paying jobs, trades and professions; and from substance abuse treatment to behavior modification and self-improvement courses. Nearly four dozen specialists – case managers, clinical psychologists, housing program managers, employment specialists, benefits counselors, facility managers – provide assistance and round-the-clock supervision for program residents. Education is such an important focus of the MCVET program that residents are referred to as “students,” and they work toward “graduation” to self-reliance, economic independence and community involvement.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of the value of the MCVET military academy model is the number of former students who now provide assistance to other homeless veterans struggling with the demons and challenges they once encountered. They serve as examples of what is possible, and are keenly aware of the obstacles students must overcome.

In April 1999, MCVET enhanced its employment services when it received a grant of \$70,000 from the Department of Labor Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP). The center’s HVRP program has grown every year, and in 2003 it was awarded \$203,558, which was used to provide intensive employment services to approximately 200 homeless veterans facing significant barriers to employment.

The MCVET military model program stresses the principles of individual accountability, self-discipline, organization and teamwork. Residents are organized into platoons and squads. Students are accountable to each other, their fellow platoon members, and the designated platoon leadership. All residents are expected by their peers to be accountable for their actions. This order and structure replaces the chaos they have experienced while homeless and prepares them for reentry into the community.

The highly structured and closely monitored social order is not universally accepted within the social services community, nor should it be. The military academy environment, however, makes it an ideal option for individuals who are working to regain self-esteem and self discipline, and who need strong supervision in the beginning of their development programs. MCVET prides itself in embracing “hard-to-place” veterans and

helping them change their lives. As Executive Director Col. Charles Williams points out, “The program works for individuals who would almost certainly fail in other facilities, if they were admitted in the first place.”

The HVRP program has become an integral part of the continuum of services provided by MCVET. The fundamental approach to homeless services is to provide assistance through a continuum of incremental steps that enable students to rejoin their communities as productive citizens. For the first three months, homeless veterans are placed in emergency housing where case managers help determine their needs and challenges, ensure that all benefit resources are accessed, and help them set education and employment goals. Students who suffer from mental illness or substance abuse issues begin receiving treatment. This is a critical component of the enrollment process because more than 98% of homeless veterans who enter the MCVET program have addiction problems, and more than 80% have mental disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Most of the veterans who complete the emergency housing program will still need supportive services and housing. These individuals are admitted to the transitional housing program for up to two years, where substance abuse counseling and mental health treatment continues and life skills classes are provided. Along the way, clients are enrolled in the Education, Training and Employment Program (ETE), where individual training needs are assessed and classes are provided. Upon successful completion of the ETE program, students are referred to employment services.

The Employment Services Program provides intensive job development, job search, labor market information, assisted placement, job workshops, resume preparation and interview skills training. HVRP funding pays for the salary of an employment program coordinator, who provides career and employment counseling, assessments and referrals to employers. This resource is complemented by a DOL Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist, who conducts pre-employment and resume training on the MCVET campus.

Most recently, HVRP funding increases have made it possible to purchase computer equipment and training materials for on-site training programs. Instruction is now available in skilled vocations such as heating and air conditioning, accounting, mechanical trades, and computer systems management. These improvements have allowed program graduates to earn, on average, almost 30% more than other veterans who did not participate in the program. MCVET provides a wide range of employment services for its students in a centralized location. This “one-stop” model is successful because it maximizes the ability of residents to access all available programs without having to travel to distant locations. It also improves communication among agency employees working with clients at different levels of the development process. Both factors reduce the number of students who fall through the cracks of traditional service delivery models.

Another requirement for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities served. This includes communicating the availability of services that are provided by nearby agencies and organizations, and

collaborating with them to maximize the support available to program participants. MCVET benefits from the assistance of several community partners, including:

- Department of Veterans Affairs – health care, outpatient substance abuse, mental health services
- Department of Labor – HVRP, employment specialist training
- Department of Housing and Urban Development – provides MCVET with section-8 vouchers for permanent, subsidized housing
- Maryland State Department of Rehabilitative Services – educational funding and assistance
- Baltimore City Office of Homeless Services – refers veterans to MCVET
- United Way/Combined Federal Campaign/Maryland Combined Campaign
- Maryland Job Services – provides a DVOP onsite at MCVET campus
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Maryland Energy Assistance Program

For more information about MCVET partners, see <http://www.mcvet.org/sponsors.htm>.

MCVET HVRP Success Measurements for FY 2003

	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Program Enrollments	228	198	87%
Employment Placement	218	191	88%
Hourly wage @ placement	\$8.50	\$11.86	140%
Cost per placement	\$934	\$1,272	136%

As the table above shows, clients were being hired for jobs at wages that well exceeded the goal. This was a direct result of the improved training available to clients that year and strengthened relationships with employers hiring for skilled positions. However, fewer clients became employed than originally anticipated. MCVET explains that the number dropped below expectations during the fourth quarter of the fiscal year, when the economy was weak, unemployment was rising, and employers were not hiring. This also led to a higher cost per placement. However, those who gained employment received, on average, nearly \$12 an hour in reliable, long-term positions, which improves the likelihood of successful graduation to permanent housing and a higher quality of independent living.

- For more information on MCVET, go to: <http://www.mcvet.org>.
- For more information on HVRP, go to: <http://www.dol.gov/vets>.

Massachusetts Veterans Inc. HVRP Gives Homeless Veterans Technical Advantage

At the beginning of the 1990s, a group of Vietnam veterans banded together to open a homeless shelter for fellow veterans in Worcester, MA. In 1992, the group formed a nonprofit organization called Massachusetts Veterans Inc. (MVI), and with assistance from the state of Massachusetts, volunteers and labor unions, they opened a shelter in a previously condemned National Guard armory. The shelter served as a temporary home for nine clients when it opened. In the 11 years since, MVI has expanded to provide housing and supportive services to more than 5,000 homeless veterans.

In 2000, MVI applied for and received an \$82,425 grant from the Department of Labor (DOL) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP). This funding allowed the organization to develop the MVI Employment and Training Division (MVIETD) to help shelter residents prepare for and find employment.

The MVIETD employment program involves providing needed wrap-around services that maximize client success in securing employment and achieving self-sufficiency. Employment services that are provided include job counseling and assessment; pre-employment services such as interview training, application and resume completion; internet job search instruction; training; and job placement services.

Wrap-around services that are an integral part of the program include transitional housing, clothing, medical and substance abuse treatment referrals, and transportation assistance.

Employment specialists provide one-on-one case management to clients. They help clients conduct job searches, provide job coaching, schedule interviews and ensure clients receive the transportation assistance they need to get to interviews and job sites. Clients are encouraged to enroll in computer training courses at the MVI Computer Academy. Courses include basic computer literacy, an eight-week computer building and repair course, and a six-week certification preparation class.

MVIETD has a current budget of \$337,732, with \$275,787 funded through the HVRP program, and the rest coming from the City of Worcester Community Development Block Grant, donations and fundraising. The organization has increased its interaction with local employers to help identify employment opportunities.

The computer academy has instituted an internationally recognized certification and testing course provided free of charge to clients. MVI also owns and operates the Mobile Education Center, a handicapped-accessible, 32-foot recreational vehicle equipped with 12 Dell computers. This resource is used to expand access to computer training in several rural sites.

HVRP programs are expected to provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities they serve. MVI collaborates with local community-based organizations and government agencies to improve and expand services for its clients, including:

- United Veterans of America
- Veterans Transition House
- Massachusetts Veterans Outreach Center
- Veterans outreach centers in Marlboro and Pittsfield
- The Puerto Rican Veterans' Association of Massachusetts
- Transitional housing programs across the state
- Government agencies, including VA hospitals and clinics
- The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars
- One-stop work centers throughout the state

The Department of Labor traditionally approves HVRP programs that include innovative practices that can be replicated in other parts of the country. According to Allison Alaimo, MVI Employment and Training Manager, the Employment and Training Division is innovative in its approach to the care and rehabilitation of homeless veterans because of its focus on employment as the means to end homelessness. The goals established within each employment plan are individualized and attainable because they are based on a comprehensive understanding of the needs and skills of each client. The program also includes job retention efforts to ensure that those who find employment and housing have the resources they need to avoid returning to the street.

Massachusetts Veterans Inc. HVRP – 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Assessments	772	761	99%
Enrollments	500	538	108%
Placed in Perm Housing	183	178	97%
Pre-Employment Services	261	463	177%
Occupational Skills Training	130	192	148%
Employment Placement	157	182	116%
Combined Placements (Emp.)	244	254	104%
Retained Employment 90 days	193	139	72%
Retained Employment 180 Days	163	96	59%
Average Hourly Wage	\$9.25	\$9.79	106%

In order to determine the level of success each HVRP program achieves, DOL assesses outcomes that are compared to goals outlined in each organization's application. Grant recipients must file quarterly reports with the department. Massachusetts Veterans Inc. exceeded most of its program goals by large margins.

According to the above measurements, the MVI program has earned high marks in enrollments, pre-employment services, occupational skills training, direct employment placement and hourly wages. The program had room to improve in employment retention and assisted placement. All other areas were within 5% of program goals.

The combination of services, collaboration with the community, and the extensive outreach efforts provided by MVI constitute an effective, model program that other

homeless veteran employment programs can implement. The program provides modern, useful computer training that gives homeless veterans skills that may not be possessed by other job applicants, and the mobile education center takes the training where clients need it. This innovative approach to employment training and outreach has earned MVIETD recognition as a national HVRP best practice.

- For more information on MVI see: <http://www.massveterans.org>.

- For more Information on HVRP, see: <http://www.dol.gov/vets>.

Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse HVRP Provides Training to Fill Manpower Shortages

Located in Boston, MA, Veterans Benefit Clearinghouse Inc. (VBC) began its veteran assistance program in 1992. Formed to focus on the homeless veteran, the organization was originally called Vets Path, but the name was later changed to reflect the expansion of its services to meet an ever-increasing need for public assistance programs to help the poor and otherwise underserved communities in a large metropolitan area. The organization as a whole operates with a total budget of \$1.2 million annually.

The VBC Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) receives funding from several sources, including the Department of Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem program, the State of Massachusetts Department of Veteran Services, a Community Block Grant from the City of Boston, and private foundations and individuals. VBC will spend \$331,684 on its employment services programs in FY 2004. For the first three years of HVRP funding, VBC received \$100,000 per year, and did not receive a grant in 1996. From 1998-1999, the VBC HVRP program was funded at \$150,000; in 2000, VBC was awarded \$300,000; and since then the program has received \$250,000 per year.

The VBC program specifically targets the homeless veteran population in the Boston area. Participant demographics are: 85% African American, 10% Caucasian, and 5% Hispanic; 15% are women, and 85% are men. The overall population is about 50% veterans, and the other half are family members and dependents of veterans.

Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse feels that it is necessary to provide a wide range of services to its clients. Services available to HVRP program participants include case management and counseling, employment training and placement, pre-vocational training, emergency services – food pantry, rental assistance, utilities assistance, housing (SRO) and housing placement (section 8) – and health education. These services cover the entire continuum of care, and enables homeless veterans to return to society as productive, independent citizens at a much quicker rate

When VBC first received HVRP funding, it was basically a homeless program aimed at providing shelter. Since then the organization has been able to focus on employment readiness services and job placement. VBC has added additional services such as computer training and emergency supportive services to its assistance programs. With the increasing value of technology in the workplace, VBC feels that computer skills are vital to its clients' success in searching for and gaining employment. By working with and maintaining in communication with area employers, staff have discovered where the region's manpower shortages are, and VBC has been able to prepare its clients for those targeted employment opportunities.

In addition to providing employment counseling, job readiness courses, job referrals and placement services, VBC provides employment-specific training for program participants. A unique aspect of VBC's program is its internal employment training programs specializing in the medical and computer technology fields. Allied Health Training prepares people to become medical assistants, phlebotomists, laboratory

assistants and medical receptionists. Graduates who complete this short-term classroom and hands-on training program are given assistance to find jobs paying up to \$15.00 per hour. The Computer Training Laboratory provides residents of Greater Roxbury with affordable computer training and access to the type of computers they need to master to successfully compete for office and communications jobs. Both programs include pre-vocational skills training to prepare homeless veterans for their successful return to the work place.

One of the organization's great successes is its collaboration with more than 100 government agencies and community-based service providers. These partners help to provide employment services, assistance in applying for and obtaining veteran benefits, substance abuse treatment and counseling services, medical and mental health services, emergency and transitional housing, halfway houses, and HIV and AIDS resources. This collaboration has resulted in an increase in the number of veterans who receive assistance because of the cooperation among agencies providing specialized services.

Although VBC does not maintain formal memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with many of its collaborative agencies, its strategy is to belong to many of the state's collaborative service provider groups. These include the Human Service Providers, Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, Boston Workforce Development Collaborative, Timothy Smith Network, and the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, to mention a few. VBC staff serve on the boards of directors of all those coalitions. Working relationships are maintained through monthly meetings. This network of service providers is the link to the success of the VBC program, promoting the reputation and visibility of its services and success within the service provider community.

The foundation of VBC's employment services program is effective case management. Staff are experienced working with veterans who have experienced long-term homelessness and frequent substance abuse. Many of the program clients are struggling with one or more serious barriers to re-entering the workforce.

VBC's Counseling, Information and Referral Services links individuals and families in crisis to VBC programs and other needed services. Staff provide individual and group counseling designed to help veterans find employment, housing programs, resolve personal and family crises, and deal with other stress issues they may face.

Specialty counseling is also provided to help veterans work through Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and emotional problems. This one-on-one focus allows the case manager to get to know the client and better understand what support he or she may need. A relationship of trust develops gradually, which results in an individual plan that enhances the veteran's prospects for gainful employment.

During the last year of HVRP funding, the VOC program was within 15% of all its goals, exceeding the target in several categories. The average range was 92-108%. During the immediate future, VBC hopes to expand its programs to help a larger percentage of the area's increasing homeless veteran population.

HVRP Program Outcomes – 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	233	240	103%
Vocational Assessments	160	160	100%
Employment Placement	67	62	93%
Permanent housing placement	50	65	130%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.25	\$8.25	100%

Considering the challenges its homeless veteran clients must overcome for successful re-entry into the work place – many are dealing with several – and the heavy caseload the organization tries to help, the outcomes of the Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse are commendable. The success of the VBC program depends on highly skilled and dedicated staff connecting homeless veterans to the benefits and services provided by an extensive care provider network. The employment assistance program is regarded as the critical component of the VBC continuum of care model.

Perhaps just as important is VBC’s work to strengthen that network and its continuing efforts to advocate for the integration of available services into a system that provides comprehensive assistance to all of the city’s homeless individuals and families.

- For more information about the Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse HVRP program, contact Vernell Baker at vernellb@yahoo.com.
- For information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Michigan Veterans Foundation **Serves as Model for Collaborative Service Delivery**

In 2000, the Michigan Veterans Foundation applied to the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) for a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant to develop an employment assistance program for homeless veterans in the Detroit area. MVF was awarded a grant of \$246,050 and opened the Detroit Veterans Center-Project Charge (also known as HVRP-Detroit) in May. The program, now funded at \$249,890, has received HVRP funding every year since, and continues to provide targeted services tailored specifically to the needs of homeless veterans.

Clients of HVRP-Detroit are offered a wide variety of services, which are coordinated according to the needs of each individual. Each veteran receives an employability assessment when beginning the program. Individual development plans are developed and take into account such factors as physical and mental condition, sobriety, employment history, education and training, interest and skills, and personal needs such as proper identification and clothing. Program participants are given life skills training and in-house employability training (Vision Quest). Classes combine basic job seeking etiquette with discussions about challenges to obtaining employment, interview skills, and staying sober while seeking employment and after being hired.

Veterans are entered in a vocational counseling program that begins the job placement process. This is accompanied by training in resume development and practice in mock interviews that will maximize client success during the recruitment process. Transportation assistance is available to help ensure that clients maintain attendance stability and opens up job opportunities in a larger area.

Depending on the individual development plan, veterans may receive financial assistance to cover the costs associated with obtaining vital records and photo identification cards, police clearances, uniforms or suitable work clothing, training fees, tools and relief from other financial obstacles to employment. This kind of support is rare and requires a significant collaboration among community-based organizations, government agencies and the business community.

Other services include:

- Outreach (actively seeking to enroll veterans who frequent other organizations that are not in the immediate vicinity of the DVC).
- On-site workshops provided by guest employers and social service providers
- Referral to educational or job training programs
- Relapse prevention services (in-house or referrals).
- Letters of recommendation, status or advocacy.

HVRP-Detroit has grown significantly since May 2000 in size and range of services that are available. It has increased from one room with a phone and a computer to a four-office complex that includes a bank of computers that serves as a job search lab. The program staff now includes a co-located veterans representative from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic growth, who officially registers clients as job-seekers in the state

employment services system. This improves the likelihood of success by widening the scope of job searches and increasing the number of employment opportunity leads.

Additional space and resources have led to several other positive changes, including improvements in:

- Accessibility to HVRP Staff
- Frequency and quality of classes and workshops.
- Communication between clients and potential employers.
- Self-esteem of both HVRP staff and veteran clients.
- Storage space for interview clothing and hygiene supplies.
- Professional atmosphere.
- Online employment application assistance.
- Classroom and study space with on-site library.

One of the requirements for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities they serve. HVRP-Detroit has diligently worked to establish an extensive, collaborative network of resources to surround its clients with all possible services. Partners include:

Government agencies:

- Michigan Employment Commission (official registration for job seekers, job leads, online resumes),
- VA Medical Center, Detroit (outpatient substance abuse treatment, anger management counseling, all healthcare needs),
- VA Vet Centers,
- The twelve chartered veteran service organizations
- VA Healthcare for Homeless Veterans
- Michigan Veterans Trust Fund
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services Wayne County Legal Services
- Wayne County Family Agency

Job skill and training programs:

- Wayne State University's Veterans Educational Opportunities Program (remedial education, computer applications training, educational counseling);
- Goodwill Industries (employment training for disabled clients),

Shelters:

- Salvation Army
- Detroit Rescue Mission

Collaborations serving the homeless:

- Committee On Temporary Shelter
- Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness,
- Homeless Action Network,
- AIDS Partnership of Michigan,

- Collaborative on Offender Training and Employment (COTE) (serving clients on parole or probation with pre-employment training, resume assistance, clothing, bus tickets, and supervised job searches),
- Military Order of the Purple Heart,

Medical, addiction and disability providers:

- Cass Methodist Hospital,
- Alcoholics Anonymous,
- Narcotics Anonymous,
- Mariners Inn Sobriety House,
- Blue Water Center for Independent Living (independent living education and supportive services, and advocacy for clients with disabilities),

Other Non-profit organizations:

- Forgotten Harvest,
- Neighborhood Services Organization,
- Operation Get Down,
- Operation Helping Hand,
- Traveler's Aid Society,
- Society of St. Vincent DePaul (furniture, clothing),
- Jewish Vocational Services (job leads, bus tickets, eyeglasses, dentures, janitorial training, time-limited computer lab, resume assistance, relapse prevention).

The HVRP-Detroit program has demonstrated a high level of success in connecting homeless veterans with the services and training they need in order to find and retain employment, housing, and stability. Almost every performance goal outlined in the MVF grant proposal has been met or exceeded.

The key to the success of HVRP-Detroit, according to Tobi Geibig, Executive Director of MVF, is “facilitating an understanding of the special problems and needs of veterans to other social service and government agencies through active collaboration.” That extensive partnership allows homeless veterans to benefit from the broadest possible spectrum of supportive services. They are also assured of basic necessities, such as housing, food, counseling and health care.

Active collaboration by HVRP-Detroit has led to some very impressive achievements, including::

- Incorporation into the Michigan Veterans Foundation / Detroit Veterans Center, allowing our clients immediate access to shelter, food, clothing, and counseling.
- Co-location of a Department of Labor & Economic Growth, Employment Service Agency employee on-site (as mentioned earlier)
- Expedited employment consideration for our clients with private employers including Compuware, MGM Grand (Detroit), Sams' Club, Express Personnel Services, Labor Ready Inc., Securitas, Fishbones Restaurants Inc., Goodwill Industries, and a host of smaller corporations and companies. Most of these employers provide on-the-job training

- Onsite establishment of a Blue Water/Wayne County Center for Independent Living Satellite Office, serving our clients with independent living skills classes and access to a variety of social and economic services.
- Collaboration with local shelters in identifying homeless Veterans in order to keep Veterans informed of our available services.

HVRP-Detroit leadership hopes in the future to develop a “one-stop shop” of co-located homeless service providers offering a full range of employment, educational, social and medical services for clients. While this is an ambitious goal, with the innovative and replicable program developed by the Michigan Veterans Foundation, it may just be possible.

- For more information on Michigan Veterans Foundation, see: <http://www.vethelper@earthlink.net>.
- For more information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.html.

HVRP Program Outcomes – FY 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Assessments	400	452	113%
Total Agency Enrollments	250	272	109%
Vocational Counseling	250	272	109%
Housing Placement	210	242	115%
Employment Placement	140	171	122%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$8.50	\$8.25	97%
Retained employment – 90 days	100	119	119%
Retained employment – 180 days	70	74	106%
Pre-employment services	140	272	194%

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans Employment Program Depends on Partnerships

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV), located in Minneapolis, has been helping veterans for over 12 years, serving over 2,400 veterans during that time with a wide range of housing and outreach services in a seven-county area. MACV, determined to increase the level of employment and housing services provided to homeless veterans in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, was awarded a Department of Labor Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant in March 2000. Funding for the organization's employment assistance program has been renewed every year since. With a 2003-2004 HVRP budget of \$300,000, MACV continues its efforts to move homeless veterans away from the street and into employment and stable housing.

MACV has used its HVRP grant to expand its reach into the metropolitan twin cities area, funding the salary of four case managers and one metro regional director. One case manager, stationed at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center with Veterans Industries, completes the initial interviews, places the veteran in the work station and maintains contact with the VA clinical case managers as well as the job supervisor as part of the Employee Development Plan (EDP). The goal of the EDP is to prepare the veteran to enter the work force.

The HVRP Housing case manager interviews veterans to determine the appropriate housing setting for their needs. Once veterans are placed, they begin the process for movement from transitional to permanent housing. The housing plan is also part of the EDP.

The other two HVRP case managers work with local Department of Labor Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) to provide outreach focusing on recovery and the removal of barriers to employment and housing. Some of the areas of concern include focusing on sober living, money management and debt reduction

The HVRP Metro Regional Director is responsible for all program integration in the seven-county metro area. The director makes sure that case management services, of which HVRP is the main recipient, are integrated with well maintained and available housing stock, which MACV owns or leases. The director makes sure that that support services are provided by leveraging other funding sources. He also coordinates health care services for the veterans through VA.

Another requirement for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities served. This includes communicating the availability of the different services being provided, and collaborating with other organizations to maximize services for program clients. MACV works closely with:

- Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
- Minneapolis VA Medical Center
- Vets Center

- County veterans service officers
- Local workforce centers
- Local nonprofit organizations

By placing a case manager at the VA to work with homeless veteran clients, MACV is able to ensure that all necessary services and benefits are applied for and received. Case managers also work with VISN 23 veterans health care workers to ensure that clients are able to get to their appointments at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. MACV works closely with the region's county veterans service officers, who provide eligible veterans and their dependents assistance with applications and claims for both federal and state veterans' benefits through agencies including the VA, Social Security Administration, Railroad Retirement Board, and Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. This network of support helps to ensure that homeless veterans will make it through the process of applying for benefits, gaining employment and, through MACV properties and state housing funding, securing long-term residences that help to stabilize formerly homeless veterans as they return to the workforce.

MACV administers a sober program that requires clients to abstain from using alcohol and drugs according to practices based on the Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous traditions. It believes in a comprehensive, holistic approach to recovery from the complex challenges of homelessness. The success of this comprehensive program depends on working closely with other organizations to provide a full continuum of care.

MACV also provides a legal assistance service, funded through a DOL Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) grant, which helps veterans overcome barriers to employment and housing caused by legal problems. This is an example of MACV using an existing program to maximize its HVRP success.

The Department of Labor requires grant recipients to set program goals and to meet or exceed those during the program year. MACV had the following outcomes in FY 2003 (July 2002 to June 2003).

HVRP Program Outcomes FY 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Agency Assessments	190	421	222%
Total Program Enrollments	182	349	192%
Housing Placements	190	383	202%
Direct Employment Placements	70	24	34%
Assisted Employment Placements	30	94	313%
Combined Employment Placements	100	118	118%
Retained Employment 90 days	32	56	175%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$10.37	\$10.58	102%

The MACV program has met or exceeded eight of 10 success measurements during the last fiscal year. While the program faced challenges keeping employees in jobs over 30 days, those they were able to place maintained employment at a highly successful rate.

Those who found employment were paid approximately \$10.58 an hour, more than twice the minimum wage. This rate of pay makes it more likely that self-sufficiency will be attained.

MACV provides convenient, accessible assistance to homeless veterans where they are. It integrates its HVRP services with effective, already existing programs and collaborates with other organizations serving veterans to maximize successful outcomes. These successful outcomes are clearly illustrated with detailed measurement. MACV is an excellent, replicable example of how a caring, effective organization that understands its clients and the local service system can take the lead in developing a comprehensive approach to ending homelessness and helping veterans achieve self-sufficiency.

- For more information about the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans HVRP Program, go to <http://www.mac-v.org>.
- For more information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Black Veterans for Social Justice Inc. Depends On Assessment for HVRP Program Success

Established in April 1979, Black Veterans for Social Justice Inc. (BVSJ) is a nonprofit, community-based organization in Brooklyn, NY, that has served men and women veterans, their families and members of the community for 23 years. BVSJ served an estimated 10,000 clients during 2002 with an annual budget of \$10 million. Several programs aimed at helping homeless veterans operate under the direction of the organization, other services are provided through memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with local community-based organizations and government agencies.

The BVSJ Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) focuses on providing employment services to homeless and previously homeless veterans. The program also provides guidance on filing claims for benefits, substance abuse treatment programs, and workshops pertaining to job search techniques and overcoming barriers to employment.

Black Veterans for Social Justice strives to serve not only homeless veterans, but their families and their communities. The founders believe that despite the hardships individuals may encounter during military service and from society at large, most people – and particularly veterans – want to do the right thing and will respond positively and productively if given a helping hand.

BVSJ is committed to helping newly released veterans make a smooth transition from active duty to civilian life. The staff provides support to military personnel, veterans and families dealing with issues that include social readjustment, finding housing and employment, applying for disability compensation, access to substance abuse and mental health treatment, medical services, family intervention, prison counseling and reentry into the community, and legal advocacy.

Since 1999, the organization's HVRP program has come along way from its one-room office and single phone line and computer. All this changed with the creation of the new Veterans Resource Center, funded in part by the HVRP grant. Each staff member now has a fully equipped office, and the department has its own fax machine, copier and email address. A professionally printed brochure details the center's employment assistance program, and available services are listed on the BVSJ website. These additional resources have allowed the organization to increase the quality and quantity of services provided to homeless veterans in the New York City area. BVSJ has been receiving funding since 1999, and received \$250,000 for its HVRP program from 2002 to 2004.

The success of the HVRP program is the in-depth assessment that is done on each of the clients who request assistance. The staff prides itself on the accuracy and thoroughness of each assessment. By evaluating the client's specific needs, a comprehensive and holistic plan can be created to address them.

The assessment consists of a face-to-face interview with a staff member, and answering 70 detailed questions. Some of the focus areas included in the assessment are social history, educational and vocational training, employment history, military history, housing history, financial history, medical history, psychiatric history, family status,

substance abuse, history of high-risk behavior and criminal activity. Once the information is obtained, the staff is able to determine the client's strengths, skills, interests, barriers to employment, and need for various supportive services. Then the client and staff develop an action plan that should result in steady, gainful employment and permanent housing.

BVSJ believes its success depends on how well staff members work with their clients. Service providers must fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of each client in order to create an action plan that identifies realistic goals and makes success possible. With this approach, they are able to restore hope in their clients, making them believe they can overcome the challenges they face.

Specific services provided by Black Veterans for Social Justice include:

- Comprehensive assessment
- In-house employment workshops and job readiness training
- Transportation assistance
- Job search assistance and referrals
- Resume preparation
- In-house General Equivalency Diploma (GED) program.
- In-house workshops facilitated by other social service providers and community-based organizations
- Food pantry program
- Referrals to substance abuse programs (outpatient and inpatient services), legal services, vocational programs, clothing distribution centers, Medicare and Medicaid benefits and job training programs.
- Permanent and transitional housing
- Support groups for PTSD and stress management
- Assistance with military discharge upgrades, and VA claims for compensation, pensions and other benefits.
- Hospital visits and other outreach activities
- On-site intensive and supportive case management.

In order to broaden the services available to its clients, BVSJ collaborates with other local nonprofits, government agencies, foundations and civic organizations. The collaborations are established and maintained through site visits, emails, daily telephone contacts, open house meetings, and memorandums of understanding. In order to better serve clients, many of these collaborators have negotiated preferences for their veteran clients and have outlined a specific referral system for homeless veteran clients to access their services. Black Veterans for Social Justice works in partnership with the following agencies to provide a broad spectrum of services to its clients:

- NY Harbor Healthcare System, including the VA Hospitals in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens.
- The Bronx VA Medical Center
- The Harlem Vet Center
- New York State Department of Labor
- TEC/Brooklyn Training and Employment Council of Brooklyn

- Brooklyn Workforce Innovations
- Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities
- Goodwill Industries of Greater New York
- Burns/Securities Security
- Department of Consumer Affairs
- Salvation Army Veterans Shelter
- Montrose VA Medical Center (Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Center)
- Help-Bronx Employment Center
- The Osborne Society
- Fortune Society
- South Forty Employment and Training Services
- Center for Employment Opportunities
- The Doe Fund Inc. (Ready, Willing and Able)
- St Vincent's Services

By collaborating with these organizations, BVSJ is able to provide access to resources their clients need. One of the main benefits of these collaborations is increasing the employment and training opportunities available to clients. They are able to receive training in the areas of security, cable installation, obtaining a commercial drivers license and computer skills, and then use the connections the HVRP program has developed to find steady employment utilizing their new skills.

Through its agreements with various employers in New York, BVSJ can virtually assure its program participants that they will earn their way into jobs with the potential for livable wages and advancement. The program goal is self-sufficiency and restored self esteem. This arrangement offers benefits for Black Veterans for Social Justice, area employers and formerly homeless veterans. The collaboration remains strong, and clients are able to advance in their programs knowing they will be able to use the skills they have acquired for the job.

HVRP Program Outcomes – FY 2002			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	250	246	98%
Total Agency Assessments	450	430	96%
Employment Placement	225	189	84%
Permanent housing placement	72	58	81%

During the FY 2003 grant year, Black Veterans for Social Justice enrolled 568 veterans in their program and they were able to find 151 clients housing. The average wage at job placements was \$8.75 an hour. The organization performs follow-up counseling with its clients on both a 90 and 180 day schedule.

■ For information about the Black Veterans for Social Justice HVRP program, go to: <http://www.bvsj.org>.

■ For more information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Salvation Army Rochester HVRP Program Won't Let Veterans Fail

For many years, The Salvation Army and the Department of Veterans Affairs – through the Canandaigua VA Medical Center and the VA Rochester Outplacement Clinic – have worked with several public and private agencies to coordinate a continuum of care with supportive services tailored for homeless veterans. Under a program called Project ReDirect, homeless veterans in central New York are provided with the vital services they need to regain their place in society as productive citizens, including employment preparation and job placement assistance.

The program began in October 1997, and \$142,385 in funding through the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) greatly enhanced the organization's program success in July 2001. In July 2003, a second grant of \$163, 437 was awarded by DOL-VETS.

The HVRP program has helped opened the door to a host of collaboration opportunities with a broad range of public and private health and human service providers, and has resulted in increased funding for the organization's homeless assistance programs. For example, the Salvation Army obtained Department of Labor Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) funding in 2002 for a job training and employment program to help veterans transition from incarceration, and now provides routine outreach to veterans at the Monroe County Jail and a New York state prison. Staff say HVRP funding was instrumental in the creation of seven additional transitional housing beds in 2003, and helped in the Salvation Army's bid to purchase two new vans through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem program.

The Salvation Army HVRP program provides outreach, pre-enrollment services, client assessments, employment development training, core training activities, job placement assistance, follow-up counseling and ongoing supportive services to all homeless people. In addition, the HVRP program provides the following support to its homeless veteran clients:

- A three-month, intensive employment preparation training (EPT) program in a classroom setting, which reorients participants to the workforce by developing and refining general readiness skills. The multi-discipline, long-term training gives the veteran the opportunity to address in-depth personal barriers to successful employment. The program helps the veteran develop critical skills such as punctuality, dependability, dressing appropriately, leaving personal problems at home, willingness to take direction and getting along with co-workers.
- Comprehensive, continuous supportive services which are critical in helping homeless veterans enter the workforce, maintain employment, and forge stability in their lives. The extensive network of the Salvation Army, the VA and other community agencies offers services to support the whole person – emotionally, physically and economically. The “wraparound” supportive services provide veterans with free daily lunches at the Salvation Army's cafeteria, free work clothing, and essential items like calculators, dictionaries and alarm clocks. Other

- available services include rent and mortgage assistance, other housing programs, health services and substance abuse counseling.
- Other employment-related services include money for clothing, business attire, medical and dental assistance, transportation, fees for licensing tests, driver's license, personal hygiene items, laundry supplies and haircuts.

The HVRP program has been able to expand available services through collaboration with several public and private health and human services providers, including:

- VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York (VISN2)
- New York State Department of Labor
- New York State Division of Veterans Affairs
- Rochester Works! One Stop Career Center
- Veterans Outreach Center
- Unity Health Systems.

Several factors contribute to the overall success of the Salvation Army HVRP program. The connection to the national organization's large infrastructure and ability to leverage community resources has allowed it to improve and expand its programs. Homeless veterans enrolled in the program can take advantage of job training and employment placement services, and a wide variety of other free services offered onsite at the Salvation Army's downtown Rochester campus. These services include food, clothing, prescription assistance, emergency and transitional shelter in one of four homeless adult residences, medical and mental health services at a Unity Health System clinic, GED preparation and self-directed classes, software assisted Adult Basic Education courses, and tutoring.

Through the companion program Project ReDirect, the Salvation Army is able to provide long-term follow-up and supportive case management to HVRP participants for up to four years. Since the Salvation Army is a faith-based organization, clients are able to participate in a worship community if they wish, and receive regular spiritual counseling.

During last year, the HVRP program exceeded its targeted goals despite the poor economy. Clients were able to obtain employment in diverse job areas due to the coordination of numerous community partners.

The Salvation Army feels that the benefits derived from close collaboration with many organizations representing diverse disciplines and strengths cannot be overemphasized. The HVRP program is considered a "one-stop-shop" for veteran support services. Within the Salvation Army's downtown facility, HVRP clients are offered a safe haven at the Booth Haven Men's and Hope House Women's shelters. Each veteran is assigned a case manager who works with a team of stakeholders to help veterans find stability through securing permanent, and in many cases, subsidized housing.

Veterans benefit from the services of a mental/chemical dependency counselor who is on staff and available any time the need arises. In addition, all veterans are assigned a case manager/outreach worker who is also a veteran. Various support groups are available for

residents, one of which is a veteran support group co-facilitated by a veteran peer. Clients are assigned to a job developer who helps them secure employment.

The program helps veterans retain employment with follow-up support for a minimum of 180 days after their placement. The HVRP program offers support services to participants for up to four years, allowing them to re-enroll in the HVRP program if they experience difficulties once they have entered the workforce. If a veteran needs services the Salvation Army does not offer, he or she is referred to an outreach center or other community-based organization for those services.

HVRP Program Outcomes – 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Program Enrollments	80	108	135%
Vocational Assessments	80	95	119%
Educational Assessments	12	15	125%
Employment Placement	70	70	100%
Permanent housing placement	48	67	140%
Average wage at job placement	\$7.70	\$8.11	105%

The Salvation Army Rochester Area Services provides a holistic approach to serving homeless Veterans in the Rochester Area through an expansive collaborative network. Veterans are able to get the services they need free of charge and begin their progress toward a new life.

- For more information about the Salvation Army Rochester HVRP program, send email to: bhadden@salvationary-rochasny.org.
- For more information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Saratoga Rural Preservation Company Designs IMS to Enhance HVRP Services

Several years ago, the Saratoga County Rural Preservation Company (SCRPC) of Ballston Spa, NY, determined that homeless veterans in the central New York area faced unique challenges when trying to gain employment. To address the problem, SCRPC applied to the Department of Labor (DOL) for funding under the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program in 2000. SCRPC was awarded \$115,000 and began its work in September of that year. The program has been renewed for the same amount each year since.

HVRP is dedicated to helping homeless veterans who are frequently unable to access traditional employment services obtain the vital assistance they need to re-enter the workforce. These individuals frequently face special challenges such as legal issues, mental and physical health challenges and drug addiction. The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is funded under the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), in compliance with the requirements of 38 United States Code, Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Section 2021 requires the Secretary of Labor to conduct, directly or through grant or contract, such programs as the Secretary determines appropriate to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force. HVRP is the only national program that specifically targets homeless veterans. While some HVRP programs have been in existence for several years, providers must reapply as a first-year program every three years, and must request renewal in the other two.

The SCRPC employment assistance program offers services for all veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, have been honorably discharged from the military, and who have been free of alcohol or drug abuse for at least 30 days. The program covers several counties in the state of New York, including Saratoga, Washington, Warren, Albany, Schenectady and Essex.

Each SCRPC client receives a wide range of services, including:

- A complete in-take interview to determine enrollment eligibility
- A needs evaluation that includes clothing, food, medical attention and housing
- A consulting session involving the job market conditions, “selling oneself,” dealing with liabilities, cover letter development and conducting a job search campaign
- Database Information Management System that facilitates rapid responses to client needs
- Job leads
- Job search follow-up and evaluation, along with continued assistance needs

Veterans served by the program are asked to stay in touch with SCRPC to provide on-going information about their well-being and progress.

The program has experienced continued growth during the last four years. The SCRPC program has been very successful, with approximately 80 percent of its program clients fully completing their work campaigns and moving on to experience substantial personal and professional growth.

One major requirement for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities they serve. This includes communicating the availability of services being provided and collaborating with other organizations to maximize the assistance received by the client. SCRPC staff members have increased community awareness efforts and have increased agency participation in community activities. SCRPC works in collaboration with several entities to ensure client success, including:

- New York State Department of Labor
- New York State Division of Veterans Affairs
- Saratoga County Employment and Training
- Saratoga, Warren and Washington County Veterans Service Agencies
- Shelter of Saratoga (SOS)
- Vet House of Glens Falls
- EOC Saratoga
- Seven area food banks and soup kitchens
- New York State Probation Department

SCRPC, through these community connections, has integrated several services into a “one-stop shop” approach. Clients are able to maximize their success by accessing the full continuum of local services in one location. This innovative service approach is unusual in rural and suburban areas, where residents in need typically encounter limited services spread out over a wide area coupled, transportation difficulties and a lack of holistic case management. Clients in these areas frequently do not successfully access or even know about all of the services for which they are eligible. In contrast to that service model, SCRPC offers, in addition to the HVRP program, the following services in one convenient location:

- Transitional housing for homeless veterans
- Permanent housing for veterans and their families
- Permanent housing for chronically ill veterans and their families
- 364 units of Section 8 housing
- An affordable home mortgage program
- A food pantry
- A Department of Labor employment assistance program

As the HVRP program grew, an increased amount of time was being spent on administrative functions. This began to limit the time available to serve clients and to coordinate services with Department of Labor Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans’ Employment Representative (LVER) specialists. This challenge led to the development of an innovative computerized reporting system that

helps SCPRC maintain the necessary administrative controls to satisfy reporting obligations while freeing workers to attend to client needs.

The system allows the department to produce accurate monthly, quarterly and annual reports on time and within acceptable guidelines. Instructions and calculations were built into the system to ensure reporting accuracy. It produces reports on standard information such as assessments, enrollments, placement and employment activities. It also ensures accountability to the clients by providing alerts needed to ensure completion of 30, 90 and 180-day follow-up requirements.

The information management system program was written by SCRPC employment specialist Art Clark, who will make it available to other grantees. He said he will perform any program customizing required by the receiving organization, and it can be modified for incorporation into most data systems.

The Department of Labor requires grant recipients to set and meet measurements of success. SCRPC had the following outcomes:

SCRPC HVRP Outcomes – July 2003-February 2004			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Assessments	56	66	117%
Total Enrollments	41	44	107%
Employment Placements	26	28	108%
Employment Placement Rate	63%	64%	101%

Since 2000 SCRPC has provided vital employment services to homeless veterans. It has developed a modernized reporting system that maximizes service delivery and minimizes time filling out paperwork. It has also successfully led collaboration and outreach efforts among local human service providers to create and expand a holistic, one-stop service in a non-urban environment. All of these innovative efforts could be replicated in other non-rural areas, which makes the Saratoga County Rural Preservation Council a HVRP national best practice.

- For information about the SCRPC HVRP program, call 518-885-0091.
- For more information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Veterans Outreach Center Ensures Success by Networking with Employers

The Veterans Outreach Center (VOC) in Rochester, NY, is the nation's oldest community-based outreach and advocacy center for veterans and their family members. The center has served more than 29,000 veteran clients in upstate New York since opening in 1973. VOC offers transitional housing, mental health services, educational and vocational training programs, and other supportive services for veterans and their families, and provides referrals to community resources for substance abuse treatment, domestic violence issues, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), parenting skills and other personal development and empowerment programs.

VOC occupies six buildings on two campuses in Rochester, a city in Monroe County. The population of the city and county is nearly one million people. The center is strategically located within walking distance of the downtown area, and within blocks of 10 nonprofit community-based service providers that work in partnership to serve the homeless veterans of the city of Rochester and Monroe, Livingston, Orleans, Wayne and Ontario counties. It is estimated more than 5,900 unemployed veterans – many of them homeless – live in the region served by the center.

Throughout its history, VOC has recognized the need for employment services and job placement assistance to ensure homeless veterans can successfully re-enter society as productive, self-supporting citizens. In April 2000, VOC received its first Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant from the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). That \$134,996 grant allowed VOC to further develop its employment assistance program – particularly its supportive services for veterans with significant barriers to employment – and immediately build a regional network of public and private service providers to provide employment opportunities for its homeless veteran clients.

The core of the VOC program is its outreach and case management initiatives. Three outreach specialists work days and evening to identify homeless veterans who need help. An initial list of more than 75 locations is used to identify sites to be visited on a regular, weekly basis, including homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, VA medical facilities, church programs, county social service agencies, soup kitchens and places where homeless people are known to gather.

The outreach program also embraces organizations and agencies that can help VOC in its work: The Salvation Army, Volunteers of America, Catholic Family center, Family Services of Rochester, St. Joseph's House and St. Francis Center, among others. These organizations become accustomed to the routine visits and information sharing, and benefit from the VOC outreach emergency cell phone number to refer homeless and at-risk veterans to the HVRP program at any time, round the clock. According to DOL officials, VOC's evening service hours devoted to outreach, case management, training and employment assistance is rare.

Social workers stationed at the VOC are an integral part of this initiative. They include representatives of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) who can provide immediate

help with applications for benefits. According to senior staff, the success of the HVRP program “from the beginning had much to do with the system set up in the first two weeks of the program – to identify target populations, programs and agencies; develop a rotating schedule of visitations; establish a solid rapport with staff at those locations; and solidify the linkages through memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and letters.”

Two of the first outreach workers were once homeless veterans. In 2001, two women were added to the social worker staff, reflecting the need to provide more specialized services for the fastest growing segment of the nation’s homeless veteran population.

Case management is divided into three categories. Clinical case managers focus on chemical dependency and mental health issues. A full-time professional clinician provides individual and family counseling for clients coping with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Persian Gulf illnesses. Residential case managers work in the VOC emergency and transitional housing programs. Vocational case managers deal with barriers to employment other than clinical issues, such as food, clothing, transportation and other needs.

Three employment specialists are assigned to focus primarily on job development. One works with HVRP clients; one with the general, non-homeless veteran population; and one with clients working to overcome serious barriers to employment, such as disabilities, legal problems and the need for intensive social services support.

The Resource Center is the one-stop career development and vocational training facility of the VOC. The center is the “launching pad” for the employment assistance program, providing counseling, case management, housing assistance and a full range of services and training. The center is a collaborative base of operations for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs outreach staff and New York State Division of Veterans Affairs full-time benefits counselors. A DOL-VETS Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) counselor provides on-site employment services.

The Resource Center also features a Veterans Community Technology Center (state-of-the-art computer center for skills training) and Quartermaster's Club, which provides professional work clothing for the job-ready veteran.

VOC’s employment services program features several unique initiatives that warrant special mention. The VETNET program is a weekly group networking session that brings VOC staff, area employers and veteran job seekers together to share information and foster the development of employment opportunities. The PROGRO initiative provides additional, more specialized training so veterans can advance in their careers. The HVRP “On-the-Job” Training project places clients in two- to four-week subsidized training opportunities in local businesses to help them develop basic job skills and personal responsibility.

Another program of notable merit is the Veterans Alternatives to Incarceration Program (VATIP). Organized in 2000 to reduce criminal behavior and re-arrest rates, VATIP is supported by government agencies and private foundations. VOC case managers work with attorneys, judges and public defenders in state, county and city courts to link veterans with drug treatment programs. To remain in the program, participants must

achieve one year of sobriety, earn at least a high school or equivalency diploma, and obtain and maintain steady, gainful employment.

HVRP Program Outcomes – 2003*			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	356	365	103%
Vocational Assessments	332	301	91%
Educational Assessments		186	n/a
Employment Placement	246	230	93%
Permanent housing placement	286	247	86%
Average wage at job placement	\$7.75	\$8.25	110%

* Numbers represent totals from two concurrent HVRP program grants.

The collaborative network that supports and helps ensure the success of the VOC HVRP program includes:

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Outreach worker assigned to VOC; teams with VOC staff; links VOC clients to VA hospital, domiciliary and outpatient services.
- New York State Division of Veterans Affairs – Two full-time staff persons assigned to VOC for benefits counseling and claims assistance.
- New York State Department of Labor – Provides on-site DVOP to case manage and job develop with VOC staff. DVOP counselor is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans’ Employment and Training Service.
- Salvation Army-Rochester: HVRP grantee – shares training, counseling and work resources.
- Science linkages in the Community/Micrecycle – Provides material assistance and consultants to facilitate veterans’ computer training.
- Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 20 – In addition to financial support, provides employment opportunities in its retail thrift store for VOC clients. Also partners with VOC to operate the Welcome Home Program (“Hand-up” to veterans returning from overseas duties).
- Procurement Technical Assistance Center – Identifies and links VOC clients with vet-owned business and companies with defense contracts.
- Unified Court System-7th District – Drug court referrals for VATIP program.
- Veterans Interfaith Clergy Advisory of Rochester (VICAR) – Provides outreach support, referrals and meets monthly at the VOC as an advisory group to the VOC’s homeless programs.
- LIFESPAN – Area’s elderly worker specialists and U.S. DOL older worker grantee. Provides training, employment, financial management, protection to abused elderly, ombudsman program and more. Provides services to VOC’s veterans over 55 (provides subsidized training worksites for vets not ready for employment). Also serves women veterans in its Women in Transition program.
- Job Development Network – Organization of 30 government and non-profit employment providers that networks to identify job opportunities for hard-to-place clients. Meets monthly at the VOC.

Key Strategies and Recommendations

Outreach – Start building collaborations with other community providers quickly and don't leave any important linkages out. Better to have too many than not enough. Maintain constant contact with them – develop a schedule of phone contacts and regular visitations; implement them as soon as possible. Obtain commitments (MOU's), detailing precisely what each party will do for the other. Use the media as much as possible to help market the program and network with reporters and PR contacts – free coverage is available for those willing to work a little to earn it (assertive salesmanship).

Case Management – Don't get bogged down trying to do everything and provide services that someone else can do better and quicker. Utilize all of the linkages available and promote teamwork in the process.

Employment – Total quality management ... everyone is a customer. Employer involvement as a customer and provider is important. Market the program aggressively to the employer and utilize employers in all aspects of the process – recruitment, skills assessment, training, mentoring, networking and focus groups. Host a community Veterans Job Fair, open houses for employers (letting clients market themselves).

Public municipal and military facilities are often free and cost effective for such events (VOC spends between \$79 and \$950 each on Job Fairs and Stand Downs, utilizing many volunteers and donations, primarily from veteran organizations). Newsletters to employers that highlight clients' objectives, skills and experience work well, not only to match clients with employers, but to market the program in general. They also are a good motivational tool for clients who find it encouraging to see such wide dissemination of information and use the newsletters while networking at recruitment events.

Training – Many inexpensive and free resources are available in communities to promote computer tech education. Use them to the max and build training partners to insure the longevity and financial stability of your training programs. Start a reserve of volunteers to augment your training programs – it's much easier to get volunteers for training than for fund raising or watching phones!

Housing – Housing is so important for a homeless employment program that any grantee that can afford it should dedicate at least a part-time individual to developing good working relationships with landlords and other housing providers. Help with other things – furnishings, utilities, security deposits, etc. – takes much burden off the minds of clients (and often staff). As a back-up, the housing staff person should develop a back-up list of housing availability and resources to help find housing, to be shared with the whole staff and kept updated. As in Rochester, several agencies can work together on developing a list and share it regularly.

- For more information about the Vocational Outreach Center HVRP program, contact Peter Blind, Vice President, Workforce Development and Human Resources, at rescent@frontiernet.com.
- For Information on HVRP, see http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Volunteers of America of Central Ohio HVRP Fueled by Service Delivery Network

Volunteers of America of Central Ohio (VOA) has been helping families and individuals since 1904. A well established, faith-based community organization, VOA has a successful homeless services program that assists clients in finding and securing housing, employment, connections with health and human service agencies, educational opportunities and access to vocational training programs. When the opportunity arose to expand services to focus on homeless veterans, VOA was up to the task.

In 2003, VOA applied for and received a grant from the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) through its Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP). HVRP is dedicated to helping homeless veterans access vital employment assistance in order to re-enter the workforce. These individuals frequently face special challenges including legal issues, mental and physical disabilities and substance abuse problems. HVRP, authorized in 1987 under Section 738 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, and administered by the DOL Veterans Employment and Training Service, is the only national program that specifically targets homeless veterans.

Each organization or agency receiving HVRP grant funding is required to administer a program that includes collaboration with other local mainstream service providers to enhance the services available to its participants. It must also demonstrate that its program is unique, successful and replicable. On those counts, VOA of Central Ohio stands among the national leaders.

No fewer than 14 local emergency and transitional housing organizations and agencies work with VOA staff and their clients, including several faith-based charitable organizations, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, Ohio Coalition for the Homeless and the Columbus Compact. Some facilities provide therapeutic recovery programs, some focus on women and single-parent families. Some programs offer permanent supportive housing for people with disabilities.

Recognizing that many homeless people – regardless of veteran status – are impacted by mental illness, disabilities and substance abuse problems, nearly a dozen partners provide drug and alcohol treatment programs, mental health services, general health care and rehabilitative programs, either in concert with local VA facilities or independently.

Employment and educational services are provided by a strong coalition of government agencies and community-based service providers. The HVRP grant and focus on veteran-specific challenges actually strengthened an already enviable regional network. VOA of Central Ohio has forged a commendable alliance that includes:

- Columbus VA Medical Center Health Care for the Homeless Program
- VA Veterans Business Administration
- Ohio Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Franklinton Job Shop
- Gladden Community House (program referrals and job fairs)

- Central Ohio Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Literacy Council
- First Source (Franklin County, employment by companies receiving tax credits for employing veterans)
- Central Ohio Transit Authority (discounted bus passes)
- Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services
- Communities in Schools (literacy, GED, other educational programs)
- Department of Labor Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) specialists.

HVRP Program Outcomes – FY 2003			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Program Enrollments	204	262	128%
Total Agency Assessments	252	287	114%
Vocational Assessments	188	282	150%
Employment Placement	122	124	102%
Permanent housing placement	186	72	39%*
Average wage at job placement	\$8.00	\$8.61	108%

** There are a significant number of HVRP participants who are currently involved in either alcohol and drug treatment programs that require residency in their facilities. These HVRP participants will not transition into permanent housing until they complete those programs.*

Through its Career Academy, VOA of Central Ohio offers homeless veterans an interactive adult learning model that centers on job readiness training and requires client participation in career planning and identifying personal employment goals. The employment preparation process begins with the development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that takes into consideration special needs – such as life skills training, cultural diversity and conflict resolution, behavioral modification that includes professional and business etiquette, and learning job retention skills.

Classroom sessions include resume preparation, job search techniques and resources, computer training, developing interview skills, introduction to the Internet, filing online job applications, and business writing. Program managers help veterans throughout the process, from enrollment to follow-up meetings. Clients will spend an average of six weeks in the academy, although the length of time and courses the veteran needs will depend on his or her IEP.

The program further empowers the homeless veteran job seeker by providing free email service; access to computers, fax machines and telephones; transportation to job fairs and interviews in the greater Columbus community; discount public transportation passes; assistance with child care issues; referrals to select clothing retailers that honor vouchers or offer discounts to program participants; food coupons; and an alumni club that provides peer support and fellowship.

According to program director Kimberly Ensign, the addition of two HVRP Outreach Specialists to the VOA of Central Ohio staff allowed the program to exceed program

goals for FY 2003 in total number of assessments, enrollments and employment placements. These specialists travel throughout the central Ohio region to locate homeless veterans, establish a rapport with them, and welcome them into the program. Staff also visit area homeless service providers and employers to teach them about the HVRP program and the benefits of collaboration with the program. Developing and maintaining open, honest communication with the region's employers is a critical part of the employment program, both for assessment of participating veterans and for cultivating job placement opportunities.

The HVRP program is an integral part of a homeless services network that utilizes several of the operating divisions of VOA of Central Ohio. Veterans receive assistance through Family Services, Men's Services, and the Educational and Vocational Services divisions, and may participate in social activities and supportive programs at the Logan and Dayton community centers. The organization reaches out to serve the homeless in both urban and rural areas, and depends heavily on the commitment of staff to overcome the logistical difficulties such a wide sphere of influence presents.

- For more information about the Volunteers of America of Central Ohio HVRP Program, contact Kimberly Ensign at kensign@voacentralohio.org, or call 614-351-1881.
- For information about the Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service programs, go to: www.dol.gov/vets/.

Central City Concern A Leader in Experience and Coalition Building

Central City Concern of Portland, OR, was created as the Burnside Consortium in the 1970s – a coalition to address the problem of alcoholism and substance abuse under a National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA) Public Inebriate grant. Under that funding program, the consortium organized the Homeless Alcohol and Drug Intervention Network (HADIN), through which publicly funded agencies could coordinate services, improve the region’s service delivery system, and track clients’ progress. The network has been meeting every week since 1980.

Central City Concern (CCC) is now a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to provide solutions to homelessness in the Portland and Vancouver, WA, metropolitan areas. With a mission “to provide pathways to self-sufficiency through active intervention in poverty and homelessness,” CCC’s housing, employment services, health care, mental health and substance abuse treatment programs serve more than 12,000 clients each year.

CCC has almost 500 employees and an annual operating budget of more than \$25 million. Its innovative continuum of services is administered by a central office that provides financial and contract services, and is supported by more than 100 funding sources. Actually, more than 3,500 individuals, businesses, corporations, civic groups, churches and private foundations make regular financial contributions to Central City Concern each year.

The organization also has several contracts with federal, state, county and city governments, and has managed many federal grant programs. For the last six years, CCC has received funds under the Department of Labor-Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP).

The total budget for all of CCC’s veteran assistance programs is \$840,000; and in FY 2003, \$210,351 of that came from an HVRP grant. CCC has received funding under the DOL-VETS program continuously since April 1998. It is estimated there are about 5,270 homeless veterans in the service area, and CCC’s HVRP program has been able to provide services for only about 8% of them in the last six years. The organization is therefore dedicated to expanding its services for the homeless veteran subpopulation.

Central City Concern’s HVRP builds on the strength of the agency’s One Stop employment center, its continuum of services and housing, and its collaborations with federal and state agencies, and community-based service providers. Homeless veterans who participate in the HVRP program receive the following services:

- Skills and interest assessment.
- Individualized employment planning
- Case management
- Training and workshops on methods of seeking work, resume creation, interview skills, and other pre-employment training support

- Tutorials and classes
- Computer skills training
- Vocational training
- Access to a resource center, including personal voice mail, telephones, computer, printer, Internet, fax and copy machines
- Transportation assistance
- An employment service program developed for ex-offenders
- Employment-related housing programs
- Job development
- Follow-up and retention services that include employer support services

During the last quarter century, Central City Concern has developed a powerful, effective coalition of employment service providers by establishing and strengthening collaborative agreements with:

- Oregon Employment Department – A representative of the OED is out-stationed in CCC offices for 8 hours per day.
- Department of Social and Health Services – Administration of the food stamp program and Oregon Health Plan. DHS provides two full-time employment case workers.
- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation – Provides services to persons with disabilities. Representatives are on-site 4 hours each week and available to see veteran clients.
- Multnomah County Aging and Disabilities – Focuses on needs of aging and disabled persons. A representative is on-site for 3 ½ hours each week.
- Dislocated Worker Program – Provides services to workers who have lost jobs through no fault of their own. A representative is on-site for 3 ½ hours per week.
- AARP – Helps provide employment opportunities for persons 55 years and older. Two AARP work-experience assistants are available in the CCC resource room each day to provide full-time resource assistance.
- Multnomah County Department of Adult Community Justice – Provides assistance to clients who are just returning to the community from incarceration, many of whom are veterans. In addition, HVRP staff visit Multnomah County Jails, the federal prison at Sheridan and other correctional facilities to provide pre-release inmates with information about the services provided by HVRP and the West Portland One Stop.
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – CCC is an active participant in the VA's Community Reintegration Services. HVRP also participates in the CHALENG program.
- Faith-Based Organizations – Coordination of efforts to serve the veteran population. Organizations include the Salvation Army, Union Gospel Mission, Teen Challenge, Portland Rescue Mission and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.
- Mercy Enterprises Inc., a division of Mercy Corps – Provides assistance through Individual Development Accounts and Loan programs to assist veterans interested in starting their own enterprise. Guidance is offered in the preparation of sound business plans to enhance project success.

In addition, CCC maintains close contact with the Mayor’s Office and the City Commissioners of Portland, as well as the office of the Multnomah County Chair, the Mayor’s Office of Vancouver, and the County Administrator in Clark County.

HVRP Program Outcomes – 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	335	301	90%
Pre-employment services	310	301	97%
Employment Placement	155	144	93%
Housing Placement	260	244	94%
Average wage at job placement	8.00	9.16	114%

	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Retained Employment 90 days	60	65	217%
Retained Employment 180 days	30	38	127%
Classroom Training	550	1398	254%
On the Job Training	25	24	96%
Remedial Education	25	27	108%
Occupational Skills Training	35	32	91%
Alcohol and Drug Treatment	70	75	107%
Offender Services	75	71	95%

Central City Concern is also the largest employer of formerly homeless individuals in Portland. Of its 400 staff members who work with homeless clients, roughly 75% are in recovery from addiction to drugs or alcohol, and many have experienced homelessness firsthand. This makes case managers more effective in their interaction with clients, and stronger advocates for CCC programs during discussions with area employers, government agencies and service providers.

Collaboration to develop effective, comprehensive employment services for homeless veterans is the prime objective of the HVRP program, and that has long been CCC’s strong suit in its campaign to help the homeless of coastal northern Oregon and southern Washington. Program successes in housing and employment placements – across two state and several county jurisdictional boundaries – attest to the value of the Central City Concern HVRP program as a replicable “Best Practice.”

- For more information about the Central City Concern HVRP program, email Jack Fletcher at jfletcher@cccworkforce.org.
- For information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center HVRP Strengthens Extensive Integrated Services Network

Life on the streets for a homeless veteran is a struggle for survival – a constant battle against hunger, the elements and the threat of violence. It’s not unlike the paths many veterans traveled while serving in combat. In Philadelphia, homeless veterans can escape the ravages of homelessness and restore their hope for a better future inside “The Perimeter.”

Administered by the Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center, and borrowing its name from the tactical military boundary between danger and relative safety, The Perimeter is a homeless veteran day center providing a comprehensive range of on-site supportive services and referrals to federal, state and municipal assistance programs for low-income families and the homeless. The center is staffed by an administrator, veteran intake counselor, assessment specialists, case managers, a veterans benefits and job development specialist, and a life skills instructor.

Homeless veterans arrive at The Perimeter through referrals from VA medical centers and community-based service providers, and through Philadelphia Multi-Service and Education Center (PVMSEC) outreach initiatives. Once inside The Perimeter, the veteran has immediate access to showers, haircuts, other hygiene services, food, clothing, laundry and bathroom facilities, emergency shelter, counseling, referrals to services, and transportation assistance. The Perimeter accommodates both men and women veterans, regardless of their VA eligibility status.

A Veteran Outreach Specialist from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office provides on-site benefits counseling and helps veterans file claims and applications for discharge upgrades. Legal assistance is available through the Homeless Advocacy Project. Daily educational sessions are offered on developing life skills, relationships, personal care and health issues, substance abuse programs, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and financial planning. Veterans have immediate, on-site access to a Pennsylvania Job Center Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist, funded by the Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). Medical and mental health assessment, care, treatment and referrals are an integral part of the services offered on-site, every day at The Perimeter.

Placement in the Transitional Housing Program, LZ II, is available to homeless veterans who qualify for PVMSEC programs at the Coatesville VA Medical Center. Qualification depends on verification of VA benefits eligibility and proving substance-free status for at least 90 days. Depending on individual plans and client progress, veterans may stay in the transitional housing program for up to two years.

The PVMSEC was awarded a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant in 1990 to fund its employment training and placement services. The program’s success has resulted in annual grants of \$250,000 every year since.

Services provided to the veteran client begin with an assessment of personal needs, skills and training necessary for job placement. Results of the assessment are incorporated into an individual plan that includes housing, supportive services, and job preparation and placement assistance.

Once clients are enrolled, case managers help them remain on track and facilitate referrals to whatever services they need to succeed. Through The Perimeter, residents have access to mailing addresses, computers, telephones and other services that help reduce the cost of daily living and employment searches. Training courses on-site include computer repair, hospitality industry positions, and food services. Other educational and vocational program needs are addressed through client plans and referrals to other area agencies. The program includes job placement, help with personal budgets and financial management, and follow-up services.

Just as important as the direct services provided to homeless veterans are the HVRP program's efforts to develop and maintain employment opportunities for its participants. This is accomplished through constant and determined communication with employers throughout Philadelphia and Delaware, Chester, Bucks and Montgomery counties. PVMSEC has sponsored the Philadelphia Stand Down for 12 years, and works closely with several agencies that help veterans facing significant barriers to employment and independent living through memorandums of understanding (MOUs). A partial list includes:

- VA Medical Centers in Philadelphia and Coatesville, PA
- U.S. Department of Labor
- Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
- Deputy Managing Director's City Outreach
- Homeless Advocacy Project
- Tenant's Advisory Group
- Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Access West Philadelphia Mental Health
- Bowling Green Behavioral Health Hospital
- Belmont Hospital
- Combar Mental Health, Mental Retardation
- Eagleville Hospital
- Fairmont Behavioral Outpatient Services
- Philadelphia Gate Keeper for Medical Assistance Consumers
- Friends Hospital
- Horizon House
- Kirkbride Hospital
- OESS Shelter Plus Care II Veterans Housing Program
- Salvation Army offices in Philadelphia, Scranton, PA, Wilmington, DE, and Buffalo, NY.

A large number of PVMSEC clients are elderly or need help working through mental health and substance abuse issues. The assistance network within which the center

operates is one of the most extensive in the nation. Compliance with treatment plans can pose problems for homeless veteran clients, but The Perimeter staff prides itself in offering close supervision and support, providing scheduling and transportation assistance. All clients are offered this support. Veterans who are eligible for VA benefits receive medical services through the VA; ineligible veterans receive treatment and follow-up services at network agencies.

The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center has met or exceeded all of its HVRP program goals consistently since the inception of the program. Part of that success can be attributed to the outreach efforts of the organization – to homeless veterans and to area service providers and employers; and to an even larger degree, perhaps, to the comprehensive range of services veterans can access immediately at The Perimeter. The center’s innovative focuses on specialized assistance for the aging, disabled and women veterans have earned the organization a national reputation for providing seamless services delivery across the full continuum of care, as has its embrace of all veterans in need regardless of eligibility status.

- For more information about the Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center, go to <http://www.pvmsec.org>.
- For more information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

HVRP Program Outcomes – 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	340	364	107%
Vocational Assessments	240	255	106%
Educational Assessments	88	98	111%
Employment Placement	178	199	112%
Permanent housing placement	44	52	118%
Average wage at job placement	\$8.10	\$8.40	103%

VVLP of Western Pennsylvania Reconnects Veterans to Regional Workforce

In 1982, a group of Vietnam War veterans started the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program (VVLP) to address emerging needs of veterans in Southwest Pennsylvania. This grassroots effort has grown into a 23-employee, \$2.2 million dollar organization, mostly funded through grants from government and nonprofit entities. The primary focus of their work is to help veterans achieve self-sufficiency through employment, housing and support services.

Among the agencies funding VVLP is the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Through its Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), homeless veterans who are frequently unable to access traditional employment services receive vital assistance to reenter the workforce.

There are many reasons homeless veterans are unable to access traditional employment programs. These can include disabling conditions, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), HIV-AIDS, and problems associated with substance abuse. Many homeless veterans also have complicated legal issues with which they need assistance. Helping this population requires intensive assessment, case management and counseling services not found in most traditional veteran employment programs.

VVLP was awarded a \$151,869 grant in FY2003 that focuses on a job placement and retention program for more than 300 homeless veterans – including National Guard and reservists who have served on active duty other than training – who are unemployed or underemployed. These individuals possess marketable skills; however, other factors that include addiction, mental health challenges and legal problems, prohibit them from returning to full employment. Participants in the program must have a “other than dishonorable discharge” status and provide proof of their veteran status. VVLP receives another grant of \$291,918 that provides longer-term training for clients who lack marketable skills. VVLP provides specialized services for homeless veterans who are female and those who are leaving incarceration. These programs help homeless veterans and their families reenter the mainstream of society.

VVLP is the single largest provider of housing for homeless veterans in the Greater Pittsburgh area. The organization provides housing and supportive services, including utility assistance and other basic needs. VVLP administers five U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and two Allegheny County grants to provide transitional and permanent housing for 115 veterans and their family members in 84 apartment units. Clients include individual veterans, both male and female, as well as those with custody of their children.

Financial support for VVLP is also provided by:

- Allegheny County Department of Human Services.
- Pennsylvania Department of Labor.
- Allegheny County Department of Economic Development.

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Veteran Affairs.
- United Way of Allegheny County.
- Corporations, foundations and private donors.

Executive Director Ron Zola credits a collaborative spirit among several organizations with creating a continuum of care for homeless clients. This continuum includes outreach, assessment, enrollment, training, job placement and follow-up services, housing, transportation, health care and other supportive services. Access to these services improves the potential for job permanency and self-sufficiency. At least 17 programs support the continuum, including soup kitchens, welfare agencies, shelters, hospitals, food pantries, the VA, DOL Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER).

Several youth service agencies, including Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Boys and Girls Clubs, assist the children of homeless veterans, many of whom are also homeless, with needs assessment and children's programs. This multi-agency, regional collaboration is the result of several years of constructive and follow-up communication among several homeless service providers in Southwest Pennsylvania.

VVLP has instituted a fathering initiative that teaches homeless veterans parenting skills and provides opportunities for them to reconnect with their children. Establishing renewed bonds with their children helps veterans reclaim their full sense of self respect and encourages them in their effort to return to more stable lives. The fathering program currently serves 37 parents who have custody of their children.

The regional, multi-agency partnership approach by VVLP to serving homeless veterans and their families has become a model for the HVRP program. After awarding HVRP grants, DOL asks all grantees to designate their most innovative approach to providing job training and placement assistance to homeless veterans, and requires grantees to maintain and utilize links with other service providers in the community. DOL also requires grantees to show how their programs are unique and worthy of replication in other areas. DOL-VETS provides technical assistance continuously throughout the grant period, and monitors these programs quarterly with at least one site visit in the third quarter. Reports on the success of the VVLP program must demonstrate timely programmatic success by the third quarter of each grant year to qualify for grant renewal. The VVLP program has exceeded virtually all of its job placement program goals.

VVLP HVRP Program Outcomes – 2003			
Component	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Assessments*	438	451	103%
Employment Placements	170	179	105%
Total Program Enrollments**	320	327	102%
Vocational Training	220	234	106%
Housing Placements		258	

** All clients are assessed, but some are enrolled in other programs.*

*** The total number of veterans enrolled in program.*

What makes the collaboration between VVLP and the community unique, according to Zola, is the complementary way the agencies work to support each other while minimizing duplication of services. He cites Operation Safety Net, a street outreach program administered by Pittsburgh Mercy Hospital, as a group that locates potential clients. This allows VVLP to focus more closely on the activities it performs best, namely job placement, transitional and permanent housing placement and case management.

Other agencies, such as Goodwill, provide his client with job training. This collaboration succeeds, he explains, without a memorandum of understanding, relying on provider familiarity, communication, and a desire among all partners to help clients succeed.

Other key contributors to the success of the VVLP program include:

- VA Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER). DOL-VETS pays for these State Workforce Agency employees who can be out-stationed at various locations, including HVRP grantee sites and Department of Veterans Affairs facilities.
 - The VA healthcare system.
 - Outreach at Stand Downs.
 - Accurate and timely administrative and financial systems and reports, which are required to receive continued funding.
- For more information on VVLP, see <http://www.vvlp.org/index.htm>.
- For more information on HVRP see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Operation Stand Down Nashville Stresses Recruiting, Communication with Employers

Operation Stand Down Nashville (OSDN) began its work with homeless veterans in 1993 when it first began coordinating a yearly Stand Down event in central Tennessee. By 1999 it had become a 501(c)3 organization and had begun full-time operations. In 2001, OSDN applied for and received a grant from the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service under the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) to provide employment and other supportive services tailored to the specific needs of homeless veterans. Due to its success in helping formerly homeless veterans obtain steady employment and permanent housing, the program has received funding every year since.

The OSDN program has a three-pronged approach to the delivery of employment assistance to homeless veterans. The first is providing the resources of traditional homeless employment programs, including items that are needed to go to work, such as clothing, bus tokens, food and eyeglasses. Clients develop a plan to facilitate their job search, including resume preparation, interview training and personal development counseling.

The second service effort involves continuous, effective communication with employers about the advantages of hiring veterans. When the attributes of the veterans are properly described, many employers will select them over a non-veteran.

The third service effort is developing strong support among the various organizations that can help improve employment placement. These include veteran service organizations (VSOs), state employment agencies, for-profit employment agencies, and other relevant groups.

What makes OSDN unique in the community is its ability to enlighten employers about the specific advantages of hiring veterans. Most human resource directors have never served in the military and have little knowledge of the training that soldiers receive. When the unique qualities of veterans are explained, and misconceptions about veterans are laid to rest, many companies are inspired to offer interviews to OSDN clients. By expanding the network of employers involved in the program, OSDN has succeeded in finding employment opportunities for clients that had previously been closed.

OSDN started its HVRP employment services program in 2001 with four employees: an outreach worker, two employment counselors and an employment secretary. Funding has since been increased to provide a veteran service coordinator, an employment assistant and a front desk coordinator. This increase in staff improved OSDN's ability to provide a more comprehensive level of service with the resources necessary to help clients achieve self-sufficiency.

Bill Burleigh, Executive Director of OSDN, believes the three-pronged approach his organization takes can be easily replicated in other communities. He states that building relationships in the community is key to the program's success. Once employers have embraced the value of hiring program clients, the veterans they hire typically become

model employees. The word quickly spreads, with the help of OSDN staff, and participation by other employers increases.

A major requirement for all HVRP programs is that they provide linkages to other mainstream services in the communities served. This includes communicating the availability of the service being provided and collaborating with other organizations to maximize services to the client. Connecting with the community organizations and widely publicizing the program are core functions of the OSDN program.

Having coordinated the annual stand down for the past 11 years, OSDN has built strong partnerships with many participating service organizations in the community, including all of the local social service providers, veteran service organizations, and government agencies that work to end homelessness, including:

Non-Profits

- The Campus for Human Development
- Dismas House
- Oxford House
- Matthew 25
- Project Return
- Salvation Army
- Nashville Rescue Mission

Government Agencies

- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center
- VA Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Office
- Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- State of Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs
- City of Nashville government agencies

Funders/Foundations

- United Way
- Center for Nonprofit Management
- HCA Foundation
- Private organizations and civic groups

The Department of Labor requires grant recipients to set and meet specific measurements of success. In FY 2003, OSDN reported the following outcomes:

OSDN HVRP Outcomes – 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Program Enrollments	120	324	270%
Employment Placements	76	271	357%
Average hourly wage @ placement	\$7.25	\$9.71	134%
Employment After 30 Days	36	214	595%
Employment After 90 Days	44	136	309%

Operation Stand Down Nashville has by far exceeded all program goals for FY 2003, and its track record in long-term employment placements is commendable by any standard. The OSDN outreach worker has personally experienced homelessness and has a firsthand understanding of the issues homeless people face. This individual excels at finding homeless veterans and building a strong rapport with them. This positive interaction promotes client willingness to access OSDN services.

The staff worker also keeps social service agencies informed of OSDN services. An on-site computer lab with internet access aids job searches and training efforts. OSDN participates as a member of the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, which improves networking with and access to potential employers.

OSDN staff members, while providing employment counseling to homeless veteran clients, also assist them with issues related to housing. The agency provides transitional housing and supportive services to its clients to help them adjust to their new environment. OSDN recognizes the accomplishments of its current housing clients and celebrates the success of former clients at scheduled banquets. Current and former clients are joined these events by OSDN board members and key members of the community.

Taking time to celebrate client achievements provides hope for current residents that they can succeed, emotional support for graduates to continue their good work, and public knowledge of the outstanding efforts being made by and on behalf of homeless individuals to help them reenter the workforce and community.

Through a combination of strong human service delivery, excellent marketing of clients and strong network building, Operation Stand Down Nashville provides homeless veterans an opportunity to find and sustain high quality, long-lasting employment. This promotes dignity and self sufficiency for homeless veterans and leads to brighter futures. This program serves as a replicable model for other urban areas and is a national HVRP Best Practice.

- For more information about the Operation Stand Down Nashville HVRP program, go to: <http://www.osdnashville.org>.
- For more information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

American GI Forum–San Antonio Outreach and Diversity Define HVRP Program

The American GI Forum (AGIF) was originally created in 1948 to provide assistance to veterans of Hispanic heritage who were not being reached adequately by national programs under the authority of the Veterans Administration or by state government programs. Through outreach efforts in Hispanic communities, strong advocacy and local care provider networks, AGIF became experienced in coalition building and a force in developing and implementing integrated service delivery systems long before the idea was recognized as a social services necessity.

Headquartered in San Antonio, AGIF-National Veterans Outreach Program (NVOP) has remained committed to opening the doors of opportunity for underserved veteran populations, but its theater of operations has grown much broader than, perhaps, even its founders could have imagined. A closer look at AGIF's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) reveals the change – women, African American, Hispanic, disabled and “special disabled” veterans are represented as major subgroups. Not coincidentally, these groups present challenges that share common threads, such as lack of available specialized services, limited financial resources and societal prejudices. And since there is no “one size fits all” solution to the problems that result in homelessness, the diversity of AGIF's program participants presents its own unique obstacles to success.

The AGIF National Veterans Outreach Program was launched in 1972, and it has been providing supportive services to homeless veterans ever since. Already experienced in collaborating with community partners to expand the services homeless veterans need to stabilize their lives and get off the streets, AGIF in San Antonio was awarded its first Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service HVRP grant in 1993. Since that first \$150,000 investment, DOL-VETS has awarded the San Antonio HVRP program more than \$3.3 million, a testament to its ability to provide steady, gainful employment for a diverse homeless veteran population facing mild to severe barriers to re-entry into the workforce.

The cornerstone of AGIF's homeless veteran program continues to be its outreach efforts. Staff search for potential veteran clients through street sweeps, regular visits to emergency shelters, and constant communication with social services organizations. Most homeless veterans are not aware of the assistance that is available; and without AGIF's outreach initiatives, local agencies and community-based organizations would not know about its veteran-specific programs.

Homeless veterans receive an intake assessment to determine their health status and immediate individual needs, eligibility for AGIF homeless veteran programs, and supportive services they will require. Case managers also determine the veteran's eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability and pension benefits, as well as other federal assistance programs.

As veterans are enrolled in the program, every effort is made to take care of their basic needs. This usually means shelter, food, clothing and medical attention. For any services

that cannot be provided in-house, staff members rely on other community and government agencies that can provide them. San Antonio has an active Continuum of Care Committee that has more than 50 participating agencies providing services to homeless individuals and families. Government agencies, private groups and community-based organizations have signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with each other to provide those services, and AGIF was instrumental in the formation of that network.

The initial intervention – providing a safe, nurturing environment in which to begin the process of reintegration into society – was facilitated by the creation of the “One-Stop Veteran Service Center.” Several continuum of care service providers are located on-site in one location to provide direct assistance and referrals for homeless veterans. This is where they come into contact with:

- VA Health Care for the Homeless Program
- Transitional housing program placement staff
- Department of Labor Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS)
- DOL-VETS Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program
- DOL-VETS Veterans Workforce Investment Program
- VA VET Center counselors
- Vocational training and educational programs
- Computer skills and Internet training
- Food, clothing and transportation services

Though the HVRP funding is wholly dedicated to employment readiness, job search, employment placement and follow-up case management services, other grants have had a significant impact on the AGIF employment service system. A Department of Housing and Urban Development Veteran Integration Program (VIP) grant helps provide case management and job placement funds, freeing up HVRP funds for more training and employment-related supportive services. The VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program and a VA leased transitional housing project have allowed AGIF to enhance its housing and One-Stop Veterans Service Center programs.

One of the most striking features of the AGIF employment program for homeless veterans is its ability to provide immediate, temporary job placement for program participants in the organization’s box manufacturing and property weatherization companies. Clients can gradually re-orient themselves to the workplace, developing a sense of personal responsibility and achievement, with the benefit of flex-time schedules that allow for visits to health care facilities, service agencies, counseling appointments, and educational and vocational training programs.

They also begin to develop a renewed sense of financial responsibility. The objective is to help clients develop the skills they will need to succeed when they re-enter the workforce. The initiative also gives case managers insight into how well clients are progressing in their individual improvement programs as they assess their readiness for other employment.

HVRP Program Outcomes – 2003			
Measure	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Total Agency Enrollments	166	169	102%
Vocational Assessments	166	169	102%
Educational Assessments	108	109	101%
Employment Placement	100	117	117%
Permanent housing placement	41	49	120%
Average wage at job placement	\$6.75	\$8.49	126%

AGIF has more than three decades of experience helping homeless veterans, and its staff has a long and celebrated track record finding and developing employment opportunities for its clients. The effort has been enhanced by the organization’s longstanding involvement with the entire San Antonio business and public services community.

AGIF is recognized as San Antonio’s leading authority in the veterans’ employment and training arena, and that helps staff promote mutually beneficial relationships with area employers. Developing cooperative arrangements with, and earning the trust of, private and public employment sectors is a process that requires initiative and diligence. Maintaining and safeguarding those arrangements is paramount to the success of any employment services program.

Participation in the city’s Continuum of Care Committee, active involvement and leadership in the San Antonio Homeless Coalition, and a strong partnership with the Department of Labor, the VA and HUD have contributed to the emergence of AGIF’s San Antonio HVRP as a national model for community-based employment services programs.

■ For more information about the AFIG-San Antonio HVRP program, send email to Ignacio Leija at ileija@agif-nvop.org.

■ For Information on HVRP, see http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.

Washington State Veterans Affairs Sets Pace for Serving Homeless Women Veterans

The Veterans Services Division (VSD) of the State of Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) has the responsibility of helping homeless veterans in the state. In 2002, VSD noted a gap in services that were available to homeless women, who represent a much higher percentage of the state's homeless population (16.5%) than the national average (6%), and who face unique challenges. With a budget of \$3.7 million already dedicated to existing services, VSD in 2002 applied to the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) for a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant to help provide employment services for homeless female veterans. The agency was awarded a grant of \$249,638 to launch the Homeless Women Veterans Reintegration Project (HWVRP) in July 2002. The program was renewed in 2003 for \$249,595 and continues to offer supportive services for an estimated 450 homeless women veterans in Washington.

The WVRP program is designed to help employable homeless female veterans overcome obstacles to finding steady employment and gain access to supportive services that will enable them to succeed in reentering the workforce. Along with their homelessness, clients may have to deal with legal issues, mental and physical health challenges and drug addiction. Many have dependent children and are the only source of family income.

WDVA offers a wide range of services, including:

- Providing assistance with immediate needs such as food, clothing and shelter.
- Outreach to homeless providers to identify women veterans who need help.
- Employability skills assessments.
- Job readiness services – housing needs analysis, therapeutic work, resume development and employment opportunity referrals.
- Shelter placement.
- Transitional and permanent housing referrals.
- 30, 90 and 180-day follow-up services for women receiving permanent housing placement and employment.
- Health referrals – including referrals for dental, vision and mental health services.
- A limited amount of prescription assistance.
- Job-related needs, such as clothing, transportation, child care, food and other financial assistance.
- Education assistance, including remedial courses, trade certification and licensing.
- Referrals for domestic abuse, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and sexual trauma treatment and supportive services.
- VA benefits and other services, such as disability claims, SSI and other income.

HWVRP has found a strong connection between sexual trauma and PTSD among homeless female veterans. Case studies show that due to fear, a sense of shame or not being aware help is available, many women have never received the counseling and supportive services they need to regain a sense of normalcy. The HWVRP program

enlists the assistance of a veterans' benefits specialist (VBS) who helps these women apply for VA benefits while HWVRP connects them with the health care and other services they need through the local provider network.

HVRP grantees must demonstrate a linkage to other mainstream services that will benefit homeless veterans in the community. HWVRP staff members serve on several homeless coalitions and other groups that focus on the needs of veterans and the homeless. This activity enhances public awareness of HWVRP services and maximizes institutional knowledge of community resources and potential partnerships. Organizations with which HWVRP collaborates include those providing resources such as food stamps, child care, employment, training, clothing, veteran services, medical care, housing and many others.

HWVRP implemented a unique electronic networking system that helps publicize the services it offers. By alerting every legislator, relevant nonprofit community-based organization and public agency, the program extends its outreach to all parts of the state. A widespread mailing of HWVRP brochures and flyers complements the effort. HWVRP believes this networking system has proven very effective in coordinating services and could be implemented in all parts of the country.

In addition to its innovative utilization of a veteran benefits specialist and electronic networking, HWVRP has worked with its community partners to hold a conference for female veterans and providers who assist veterans struggling with homelessness and PTSD. Those partners include VA medical centers, Women Organizing Women, local Veteran Centers, the King County Veterans Program and Veterans Independent Enterprises of Washington.

HWVRP Outcomes for July 2002-June 2003			
	Goal	Actual	% of Goal
Program Enrollments	125	113	90%
Housing Placements	95	84	88%
Employment Placements	87	84	97%
Average wage @ placement	\$8.25	\$9.35	113%
Placement Rate	70%	74%	106%

HWVRP set challenging goals for itself in FY 2002, enjoying considerable success in placing clients in employment that pays a living wage. The goals that were not reached were within the acceptable range and were impressive enough to earn program funding renewal in 2003. Among homeless veteran women statewide, one in four was enrolled in the program, and one in five attained housing and employment. There were many clients not counted in the HVRP report who gained access to disability and medical benefits.

- For more information on WDVA and HWVRP see: <http://www.dva.wa.gov>.
- For more Information on HVRP, see: http://www.dol.gov/vets/grants/new_hvrp_grants.htm.