

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services (HVCEs)

The Role of the Community Employment Coordinator (CEC)

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Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) recognizes that employment is critical to helping prevent and eliminate Veteran homelessness and is working to provide expanded employment opportunities and a full range of employment services to all homeless, chronically homeless and at-risk Veterans. As part of this effort, VA has implemented Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services (HVCES). With the implementation of the HVCES program, VA hopes to help homeless, chronically homeless and at-risk Veterans find employment opportunities and ultimately secure stable housing.

Why Work?

“Given the choice between work and idleness, people will almost always choose work. Regardless of our station in life, the need to work remains one of our strongest drives.

Work is central to our lives. Common sense tells us that we feel better about ourselves when we are working regularly.”

Robert Drake, M.D. Ph.D.

Why Work?

- VA has long recognized the importance of competitive employment, so much so that “Employment” constitutes one (1) of the six (6) strategic pillars of VA’s Plan to End Veteran Homelessness.
- Beyond the obvious benefits of receiving income, employment is an essential element in helping Veterans permanently climb out of homelessness/poverty or avoid it all together.
- Employment provides an improved quality of life, increased self-confidence and independence, opportunities for socialization, and a decreased reliance on institutional care. As a result, employment is likely to result in decreases in substance use and improvements in mental health.

(See, e.g., Nathan D. Ainspan. United States Naval Institute. Proceedings. Annapolis: Feb 2011. Vol. 137, Iss. 2; pg. 44, 6pgs; American Psychological Association (APA) Fact Sheet, 2011; Neff, W.S. (1988) *Work and Human Behavior*. 3rd Ed. New York. Aldine.)

Community Employment Coordinators for Homeless Veterans (CECs)

- Despite the critical role of community-based employment in ending Veteran homelessness, unemployment rates among Veterans exiting VHA homeless programs have remained high.
- In FY 2013, less than 40 percent of Veterans exited specialized homeless programs with employment.
- In May 2014, Community Employment Coordinators (CECs) were funded at all VAMCs.

The Role of the CEC

- To provide guidance, training, and oversight regarding employment options for Veterans receiving homeless services across the VAMC.
- To work with VA and non-VA partners to identify local gaps in current competitive employment services targeting homeless Veterans.
- To coordinate with homeless, Compensated Work Therapy (CWT), VBA and community Program Managers to develop strategies to augment existing services and reduce barriers, as needed.

The Role of the CEC (cont.)

- To develop competitive employment opportunities for homeless Veterans, both directly through community-based job development and indirectly through leveraging community partnerships, including other federal, state, and local agencies, non-profits, faith-based organizations etc.
- To ensure that competitive employment resources at varying levels of intensity are currently available for homeless and chronically homeless Veterans, both at the medical center and in the community.
- To provide brief, targeted 1:1 interventions.

On Site Technical Assistance for CECs

- Inviting members of the VA and non VA employment and homeless services teams.
- Identification of available competitive employment resources and support for homeless, chronically homeless, and at-risk Veterans both within the VA and community.
- On site analysis of current implementation of employment services into homeless program services and training on methods to promote the role and timeliness of employment planning as part of permanent housing solutions for homeless Veterans.
- Assistance in the development and coordination of community partnerships with DOL, State Vocational Rehabilitation, Chambers of Commerce, SSVF grantees, GPD grantees, employers etc.

Opportunities for Collaborations

- **Training**
- **Funds for work-related clothing and equipment**
- **Transportation**
- **Sharing of Employment Opportunities**
- **VHA Health Care Services**
- **Housing Solutions**

Current HVCES Staffing

- 96% hiring rate for HVCES/CECs – 149 out of 155 currently on board.
- Additionally, there are a total of 70 HealthCare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) and HUD-VASH Employment Specialist positions (direct service providers):
 - 45 HUD-VASH Employment Specialists.
 - 25 HCHV Employment Specialists.

Homeless Residential Programs - Employment Outcomes

Employment at Exit (* CECs initially funded)

- Grant & Per Diem (GPD)
- Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence (CWT/TR)
- Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV)

	FY13	FY14*	FY15
GPD Exits to Employment %	38%	46%	51%
DCHV Exits to Employment %	23%	30%	34%
CWT/TR Exits to Employment %	36%	46%	50%

NEW VA Employment Continuum Group on VA Pulse

- Understanding and developing strong collaborative relationships between Department of Veterans Affairs' array of employment programs is essential to supporting Veteran employment needs, regardless of disability or economic status.
- Group's mission is to provide an opportunity for all VA staff to:
 - Learn about each VA employment program,
 - Share ideas and begin discussions on topics of interest,
 - Brainstorm mechanisms to enhance Veteran employment services, and
 - Improve Veteran employment outcomes.
- Link: <https://www.vapulse.net/groups/vas-employment-continuum>
 - Not registered for VA Pulse, no problem!
 - Visit www.VAPulse.net, enter your VA email address under “New Users”, and check your Outlook inbox for a confirmation email with instructions for completing your registration and profile.

CEC Contact Information

VA Homeless Internet Site's CEC Contact List:

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