

**STATEMENT  
OF  
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VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**December 11, 2014**

**Introduction**

Good Morning Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Michaud and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today on the Department of Labor's (DOL or the Department) commitment to ending homelessness among veterans and our efforts to provide these brave men and women with the services and support they need to succeed in the civilian workplace.

The Department is committed to helping the Administration meet its goal of ending homelessness among veterans in 2015, as guided by *Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. In leading this effort, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has generated powerful national partnerships at every level to work toward ending homelessness across the nation. Currently, Secretary Perez serves as the Council Chair. Through these interagency efforts and many others, the Administration has achieved historic progress. According to Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, homelessness among veterans has declined from 74,770 veterans experiencing homelessness, both sheltered and unsheltered, in 2010, to 49,993 on a single night in January 2014 – a decrease of 33 percent. For 2014, veterans represented 11 percent of the total 442,723 homeless adults. Most veterans experienced homelessness as individuals, 38,985 people or 96 percent. However, there were 1,708 veterans, or 4 percent, were homeless as members of families with children. Female homeless veterans accounted for 10 percent of both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless veteran populations. While homelessness among veterans has improved, much work remains to be done.

To help meet this goal, the Department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) works every day to help veterans through the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), providing grantees with the services necessary to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans. Also, the Department brings to bear programs operated at nearly 2,500 American Job Centers (AJCs) nationwide, including the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program. At the AJCs, veterans receive priority of service in all employment and training programs funded directly, in whole or in part, by DOL.

Secretary Perez and I know that one of the most important ways to prevent homelessness is through a good job. However, employment is not the only factor in preventing veterans from

falling back into homelessness. Long-term stability requires a coordinated level of care between many federal partners like the Departments of Veteran Affairs (VA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), state and local organizations, non-profits, and the private sector to ensure veterans are successful in overcoming the barriers created by homelessness.

### **Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program**

The goal of HVRP is to provide employment and training services to homeless veterans so that they can be reintegrated into the labor force, and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems which address the complex problems homeless veterans face.

The HVRP is authorized by 38 U.S.C. § 2021. The HVRP is one of the few nationwide federal programs focusing exclusively on helping homeless veterans to reintegrate into the workforce.

HVRP funds are awarded annually on a competitive basis to eligible applicants, including: state and local Workforce Investment Boards, tribal governments and organizations, public agencies, for-profit/commercial entities, and non-profit organizations, including faith and community based organizations. HVRP grantees provide an array of services to homeless veterans through a holistic case management approach, which includes critical linkages to a variety of support services available in local communities.

Successful HVRP grant applicants must specifically describe how their outreach to homeless veterans will build an effective level of collaboration with other entities, such as VA's Grant and Per Diem (GPD) grantees, the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program, VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grantees, Health and Human Services (HHS) grantees, and VA's Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Program (HVSEP).

HVRP operates on the principle that when homeless veterans attain meaningful and sustainable employment, they are on a path to self-sufficiency and their susceptibility to homelessness is diminished. HVRP is employment-focused; each participant receives customized services to address his or her specific barriers to employment. Services may include, but are not limited to, occupational, classroom, and on-the-job training, as well as job search, placement assistance, and post-placement follow-up services.

Historically, through HVRP, the Department has funded two additional types of grants designed to address difficult-to-serve subpopulations of homeless veterans: the Homeless Female Veterans and Veterans with Families Program (HFVWWF) and the Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program (IVTP). In addition, through HVRP the Department supports "Stand Down" events and technical assistance grants.

### **The Homeless Female Veterans and Veterans With Families Program**

HFVWWF are competitive grants that specifically target the subpopulation of homeless female veterans and veterans with families who are "at risk" of becoming homeless. As noted in HUD's 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, homeless women veterans accounted for 10 percent of the overall homeless veteran population. The program provides direct services through a case management approach that leverages federal, state, and local resources. Eligible

veterans and their families are connected with appropriate employment and life skills support to ensure a successful integration into the workforce.

HFVWWF grantees incorporate support services to address the specific needs of their target population. Some examples of the types of programs and services these grantees offer include the following:

- Established networks of providers that offer safe, transitional housing support for up to two years and staff who have experience in serving female homeless veterans and/or the capability of providing family counseling and youth development services for homeless female veterans with families;
- Childcare and/or after school care support to assist while the veteran is engaged in work-related education and employment programs or scheduled for appointments relating to their individual development plans;
- Linkages with mental health, primary care, substance abuse treatment, access to pediatric care, sexual trauma therapy, Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) therapy, and other health-related services through VA medical facilities or accredited community health service providers;
- Community resources which provide legal assistance in areas of family law, domestic violence, child support enforcement, and poor credit history counseling and repair; and
- Coordination with the VA to ensure participants apply for benefits and have support if they appeal their VA benefits claim.

### **The Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program Grants**

The IVTP was last funded in FY 2010. Those grants continued up through September 30, 2013, when authority to provide services under the program expired. IVTP grants were designed to support incarcerated veterans who are at risk of homelessness by providing referral and career counseling services, job training, placement assistance and other services. Eligible IVTP participants included veterans who were incarcerated and were within 18 months of release, or were released less than six months from a correctional institution or facility. For Program Year (PY) 2012, IVTP grantees enrolled 1,408 participants and had a placement rate of 63.4 percent with an average hourly wage of \$10.69 at placement.

### **Stand Down Grants & Technical Assistance Grants**

Through HVRP, the Department also supports "Stand Down" events. These events, typically held over one to three days in local communities, provide an array of social services to homeless veterans. Stand Down organizers partner with federal and state agencies, local businesses and social services providers to offer critical services, including temporary shelter, meals, clothing, hygiene care, medical examinations, immunizations, state identification cards, veteran benefit counseling, training program information, employment services, and referral to other supportive services. Funding for employment services and incentives for homeless veteran participants, such as hot meals and climate appropriate clothing, are provided through non-competitive grants awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until available funding is exhausted.

The HVRP grant also provides funding to the National Veterans Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC). The NVTAC is a Technical Assistance (TA) center which provides a broad range of technical assistance on veterans' homelessness programs and grant applications to existing and potential HVRP, HFVWWF, and Stand Down grantees; interested employers; Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs); and federal, state, and local agency partners.

### **HVRP Program Performance & Best Practices**

HVRP's client-centric, hands-on approach has successfully helped place thousands of previously-homeless veterans, some of whom were chronically homeless, on a path to self-sufficiency. In FY 2013, DOL was allocated \$36,187,711 for HVRP. With these resources, DOL funded 35 new HVRP grants, 90 option-year HVRP grant extensions, 22 HFVWWF grants, 14 IVTP grants, and 90 Stand Down grants. These grantees enrolled 16,133 participants, placing 63.4 percent into employment, with a cost per placement of \$2,965.39.

In FY 2014, the HVRP program received an appropriation of \$38,109,000 with which the Department awarded 37 new HVRP grants, 82 option year HVRP grants, 18 HFVWWF grants, and 66 Stand Down grants. These grantees are expected to provide services to over 17,000 homeless veterans, with an estimated placement rate of 66 percent, at an estimated cost per participant of \$2,200. In addition, to support grantees and disseminate best practices, the Department awarded two technical Assistance Cooperative Agreements.

The Department has taken significant steps to ensure that grantees provide job-driven training to participants. In its FY 2014 grant competition, applicants were required to identify training strategies based on local labor market information and collaboration with employers. In addition, the Department is modernizing its HVRP grant review process, converting it to a streamlined electronic grant review process that can be conducted online. Grant reviewers will be able to participate in an on-line review from remote locations, which could result in significant savings in time and resources. Finally, DOL plans to launch online competitive grant training to train all staff on grant oversight and administration. This training will help DOL to maintain a high quality of Federal oversight of competitive grantees and improve our ability to provide technical assistance and customer service to grantees.

HVRP grant recipients are measured against four performance outcomes outlined in our policy guidance. The performance outcomes are: (1) Number of Enrollments; (2) Number of participants placed in unsubsidized employment; (3) Placement Rate; and (4) Cost per Placement. DOL staff works closely with grantees to help them succeed and to achieve their goals for all four performance outcomes. A significant portion of the PY 2014 HVRP grant scoring criteria required applicants to develop formal job-driven employment and training service plans for their participants, based on the elements found in Vice President Biden's Job-Driven Training Initiative. HVRP grant recipients also report on the average earnings for individuals who retain employment. In addition, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) staff support HVRP grantees by helping grantees achieve entered employment goals through case management, direct employer contact, job development, and follow-up services.

The HVRP program succeeds, not only because of the hard work and local connections of our grantees, but also because of the collaborative efforts of our government partners at the Federal and State levels. These efforts help ensure that homeless veterans receive a robust, comprehensive network of support.

### **Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)**

Finally, DOL awards the JVSG as a formula grant to each state, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These grants support two types of staff positions in the AJC network: DVOP specialists and LVERs. DVOP specialists provide intensive services targeted at meeting the employment needs of disabled veterans and other veterans with significant barriers to employment, which includes homeless veterans. DVOPs also work in close cooperation with the Department of Veterans Affairs through the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program to provide employment support to veterans who have completed rehabilitative training. In addition, DVOP specialists often refer veterans who experience homelessness to other AJC services such as the Workforce Investment Act Adult and Dislocated Workers services and training. AJCs provided services to 17,734 homeless veterans in PY 2013 (July 2013 – June 2014). For their part, LVERs conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with local businesses to increase employment opportunities for veterans, and encourage the hiring of veterans.

### **Conclusion**

We, at the Department of Labor, remain committed to the Administration's goal of ending veteran homelessness in 2015 and we look forward to working with the Committee to ensure the continued success of our efforts. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Michaud, and Members of the Committee this concludes my statement. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.