

## Job-Driven Training Principle Six: Opening Doors

### *U.S. VETS Spotlight on Service Case Study*

In 2014, the Federal government held a review of federal training programs in order to identify and implement steps to make these programs more “job-driven.” Job-driven training, defined as “training that is responsive to the needs of employers in order to effectively place ready-to-work Americans in jobs that are available now or train them in the skills needed for better jobs,” includes seven core principles.

#### Seven Core Principles of Job-Driven Training

- Principle One: Engage with Employers
- Principle Two: Earn and Learn
- Principle Three: Use the Data
- Principle Four: Measure Results
- Principle Five: Stepping Stones
- **Principle Six: Opening Doors**
- Principle Seven: Regional Partnerships

Principle Six, Opening Doors, speaks to the heart of organizations executing HVRP: organizations doing employment services should do whatever possible to remove barriers to employment. This principle demands that programs help open access to employment opportunities for those who are most in need and who have the most significant barriers. Implementing this principle involves chipping away barriers for the veteran, but it also involves acting as an advocate to remove the blockades that separate homeless persons from competitive employment opportunities.

In Washington, D.C., the United States Veterans Initiative (U.S. VETS) provided services to 572 veterans in 2015. For many homeless veterans, the road to employment is blocked by significant barriers including mental and physical health issues, substance use disorders, and lack of employment or housing stability. The team at U.S. VETS combines a variety of services, including employment and permanent supportive housing, in a comprehensive strategy to break down these barriers and help veterans succeed.

#### Opening Doors to Services

The foundation of the U.S. VETS HVRP program is getting to know and understand the strengths and obstacles facing each veteran who walks through the door. This understanding allows staff to connect veterans to appropriate supportive services offered within the agency or through local partners. To address housing needs, the U.S. VETS team refers veterans to

#### Grantee Spotlight: United States Veterans Initiative – Washington, D.C. (U.S. VETS)

HVRP grantee since: 2012

Current HVRP grants: One in D.C., 11 nationally.

Other grants/services: GPD Transitional Housing, Call To Duty Initiative, Permanent Housing, and SSVF.



*Raymond O'Pharrow,  
Workforce Coordinator*

## Leadership in the Community

U.S. VETS takes its role as an advocate and voice for veterans in DC very seriously. In recognition of this commitment, U.S. VETS received the

Peter Dougherty Award for Excellence in Supportive Housing in 2015. That commitment extends to workforce development and employment services as well. U.S. VETS focuses on partnership and collaboration as the following examples demonstrate:

- Women in Family Television – working with this trade association has opened up an entire sector of employment opportunities;
- Washington Employment Council – actively participates in this workforce development council made up of employers and community agencies that serves one of D.C.'s most challenged regions; and
- Regional Employers (e.g. United Medical Center and CVS) – partners with local employers who review resumes, host mock interviews, and provide training to veteran clients.

transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, or SSVF services.

For health related issues, a full-time clinical director coordinates with external partners, including the VA, to ensure veterans have access to the care they need.

U.S. VETS also provides comprehensive employment services. According to Raymond O'Pharrow, the HVRP Workforce Coordinator, many veterans face cultural and psychological barriers to civilian employment. Through education, of veterans and potential employers, U.S. VETS helps bridge the gap by translating experience, teaching communication skills, and managing expectations.

## Mining Resources

Everyone is familiar with the old adage:

*“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.  
Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”*

U.S. VETS has developed an innovative approach to do both, addressing the immediate and long-term needs of the veterans it serves. The immediate needs of veterans – shelter, food, healthcare, employment readiness – are resolved through the referral processes outlined above.

Long-term success, as measured by self-efficacy and empowerment, is achieved for each veteran through a process called Mining Resources. This process teaches

veterans how to find and access resources for themselves. For one of the activities, veterans receive a worksheet with the contact information of approximately 10 local service providers. Each veteran is required to visit one of the providers and report back about the services offered (e.g. clothing or transportation). A group discussion of the potential opportunities and drawbacks of each service follows.

This approach is reinforced by employment specialists who support veterans as they identify, assess, and make decisions about employment and training opportunities. The results are impressive: high-quality job placements, sustained employment, and veterans who are empowered and stay connected to the program.