

# EMPLOYMENT: A KEY COMPONENT IN EFFORTS TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS



Source: Polk State College

Better ways to  
engage homeless  
and at-risk veterans  
in employment  
services.

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# WHY EMPLOYMENT?

- Employment gives a sense of purpose and meaning
- Provides income and creates opportunity
- Helps create identity, self-respect, dignity
- Allows participation in community
- Creates a sense of belonging
- Unemployment is a factor leading to homelessness

## EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING

- Oftentimes employment takes a backseat when we are working on housing
- Recognizing that employment and permanent housing are equally important solutions to homelessness
- One does not preclude the other – both housing and employment can be worked on together
- Employment looks different for each client

# HOUSING FIRST AND EMPLOYMENT

- Housing First vs. Employment First
- The field is changing
- Permanent Supportive Housing clients still need some income to maintain housing
- Getting a client “employment ready” can take time – start working on barriers while going through the housing process

## RAPID REHOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

- Sustaining housing
- Employment (or other income) needs to be part of the plan
- Providers and clients may wait until housing subsidy is running out to get serious about employment
- Start the employment conversation from day one

## TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

- Transitioning homeless veterans need income to successfully exit into permanent housing
- Permanent housing is the goal, and employment is part of the picture for most veterans
- Transitional housing offers a buffer while veterans address barriers to employment

## SUSTAINABILITY

- Thinking longer term - self-sufficiency should be the goal for most veterans
- Veterans want to be self-sufficient – providers need to listen to what clients are saying
- Government entities and other agencies cannot be all things to all people
- Fiscal considerations – austere times and small government

## HIGH BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

- Oftentimes providers don't consider employment viable for clients with extreme issues
- Severe barriers to employment can be overcome
- When employment services are offered more clients get jobs
- Engaging the veteran in a conversation – work talk
- Clients will surprise us



# HELPING THE VETERAN THINK ABOUT EMPLOYMENT

- Open-Ended Questions – let the veteran express
- Affirmations – focus on the positive
- Reflective Listening - reflect what you hear to let the veteran know you understand what they are saying
- Summary Statements – sometimes the client will think about what they are saying in a different light

# STAGES OF CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF EMPLOYMENT

- Precontemplation
- Contemplation
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance (and Relapse Prevention)

# STAGES OF CHANGE

## Pre-contemplation

- Person is not considering making a change
- Example: Unemployed Veteran not considering work
- During this stage, focus on engagement (building trust)

*Source: SAMHSA, 2009b*

# STAGES OF CHANGE

## Contemplation

- Person starts to *consider* possibility of change
- Example: Veteran notices negative things about being unemployed and starts to consider employment
- During this stage, focus on persuasion (active listening, education, focus on Veteran's goals, even if those goals are not employment goals!)

Source: SAMHSA, 2009b

# STAGES OF CHANGE

## Preparation

- Person has decided to make a change and develops specific change plan
- Example: Veteran decides she wants to work and prepares a strategy for getting a job
- During this stage, continue with persuasion (active listening, education, focus on Veteran's goals, even if those goals are not employment goals!)

*Source: SAMHSA, 2009b*

# STAGES OF CHANGE

## Action

- The action plan is implemented
- Example: Veteran updates resume, finds job openings of interest, and goes on job interviews
- During this stage, help Veteran enhance skills needed to achieve goals (practice interviews, resume development, getting to interviews)

*Source: SAMHSA, 2009b*

# STAGES OF CHANGE

## Maintenance (Relapse Prevention)

- Using specific strategies to maintain change
- Example: Veteran plans to use exercise and supportive friends as coping with stress techniques and keep a regular sleep schedule so he will feel more rested when he has to get up and go to work
- Focus on preventing relapse to old behaviors

*Source: SAMHSA, 2009b*

## PROVIDER ATTITUDES AROUND EMPLOYMENT

- If providers don't listen to what a client is saying, no progress can be made
- If providers don't believe the client can succeed , success is highly unlikely
- If employment is not seen as part of the solution, employment services will not be effective (buy in)
- The “housing vs. employment” mentality has to change



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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# **EMPLOYMENT**

## **A KEY COMPONENT IN EFFORTS TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS**

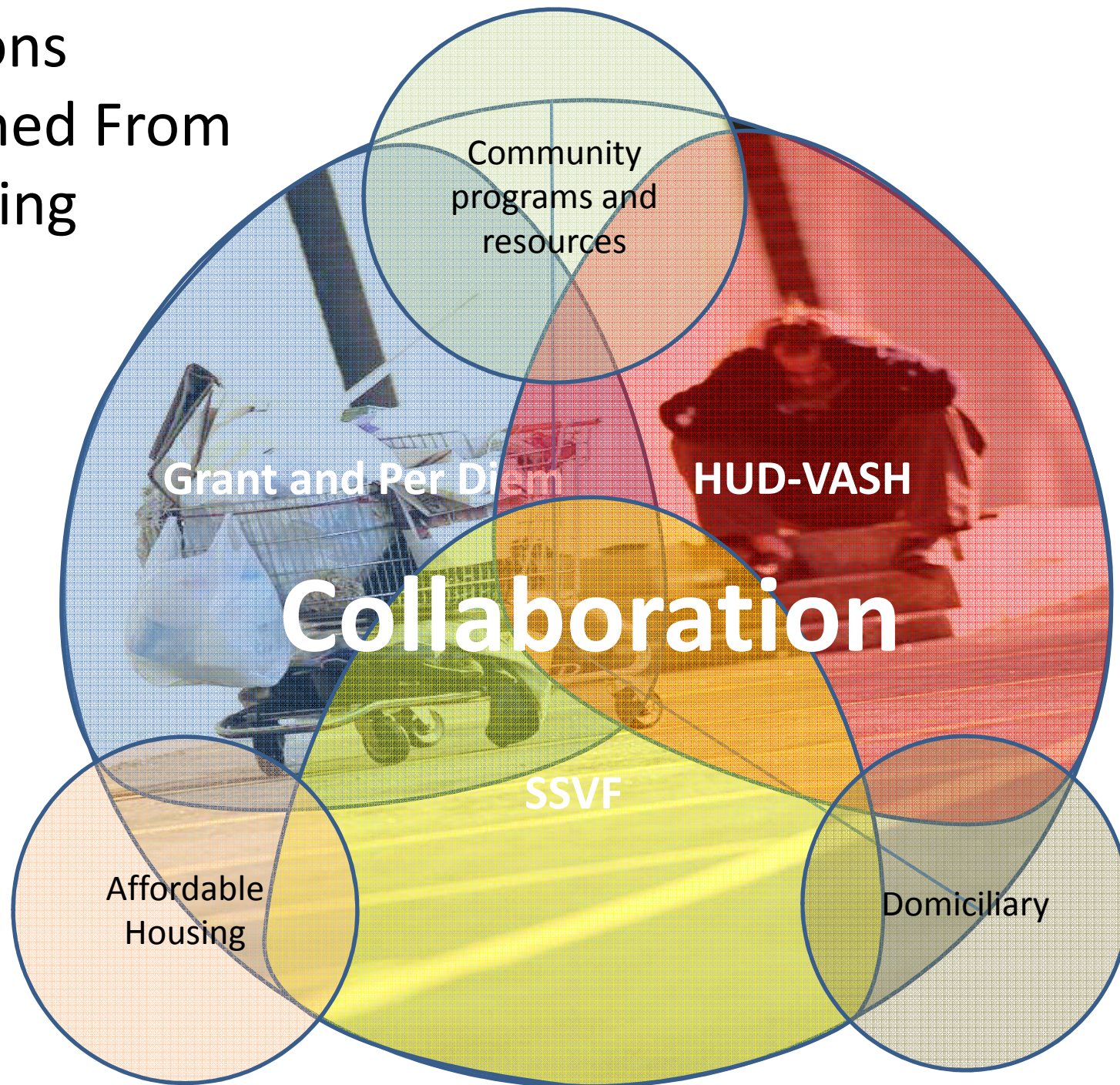
Ken Mueller, LCSW, MBA  
Homeless Programs Manager  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
Orlando VA Medical Center



# Employment Services

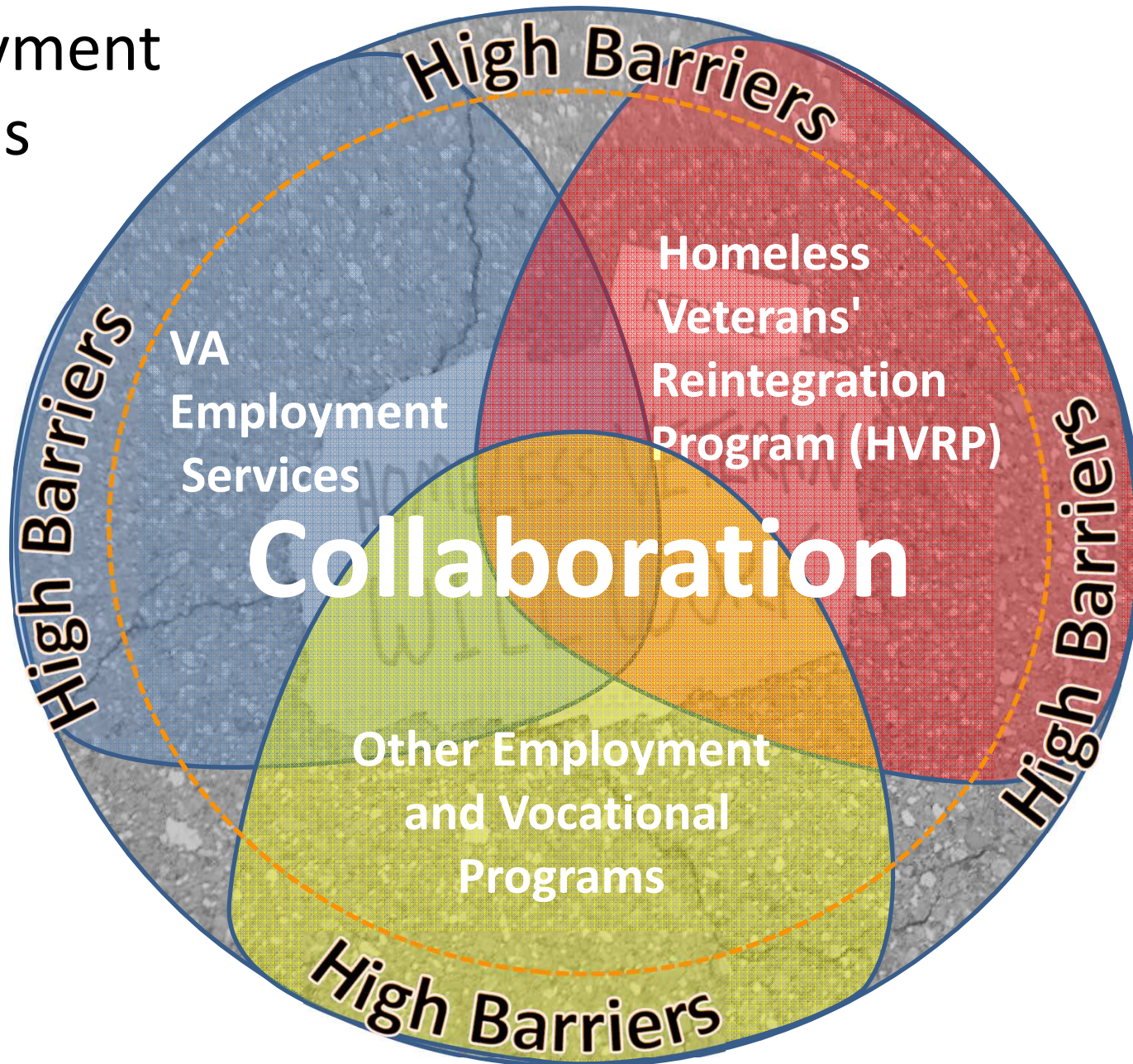
- Veterans Employment Services Program (VCEP): A local continuation of the Homeless Veterans Supportive Employment Program (HVSEP)
- Compensated Work Therapy (CWT)
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)
- Career Source, Goodwill, and other programs


# Lessons Learned From Housing






# Looking Closer At Employment Services





# Community Employment Coordinator (CEC)

- The CEC is a member of the VA Homeless Veterans Program team and leads efforts to establish a local employment collective.
- Working closely with VA and community partners to increase employment opportunities for homeless Veterans
- Maintains a database on referral, placement outcomes and provides feedback to collaborative members



# Community Employment Coordinator (CEC)

- Serves as an advocate on behalf of Veterans with members of the employment collaborative and community employers
- Identifies and provides feedback to the homeless program staff about resources, strengths, accomplishments, challenges and recommend corrective actions





# Veteran Infused Employment Workshops

Four day workshops provided by VA and local employers:

- Developing a job search plan
- Creating a marketable resume
- Veteran resources
- Mock interviews



# 2015 Employment Service Summit for Homeless Veterans



- Changing the stigmatism about homeless Veterans and Veterans with criminal backgrounds
- Workers Opportunity Tax Credit presented by Department of Labor

# 2016 Employment Service Summit for Homeless Veterans



- 10 steps to a Successful Veterans Hiring Program Presented by Disney
- How to Translate Military Jargon Presented by Army Career Employment Specialist
- Online Job Training and Mentorship presented by JobPath



- Hiring events followed each Employment Summit
- Events focused on the needs of homeless Veterans and Veterans with legal backgrounds
- Employers doing onsite interviews at the VA Medical Center



## On-site Services

- HVRP provider is on-site once a week.
- Career Source representative is on-site once a week.
- Lockheed Martin donated laptops to assist Veterans with job search and resume preparation.



# Matching

- Employment service providers are actively involved in homeless Veteran case conferencing
- Matching employment services at the same time as housing services
- Providing clear guidance regarding different employment services
- Data sharing



# Contact Information



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2016 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

# ENDING HOMELESSNESS and CAPITOL HILL DAY

July 26–28, 2016  
Washington, DC



National Alliance to  
END HOMELESSNESS



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Veterans' Employment and Training Service

Patrick Hecker Virginia DVET  
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# Enrollment at an American Job Center

*Working Toward Employment Together*





# ***VETS Mission***

## **Veterans**

We **prepare** our separating service members to transition from the military to the civilian workforce

We **provide** our veterans with the critical resources, expertise, and training to assist them in locating and obtaining meaningful careers

We **protect** the employment rights of the men and women who serve this Nation

## **Employers**

We **promote** the hiring of veterans through outreach to and partnership with employers





# *VETS Programs & Services*

american**job**center

Homeless  
Veterans  
Reintegration  
Program



University of Colorado Denver  
**NVTI**  
Training Solutions

Jobs for  
Veterans  
State  
Grants  
(JVSG)

Homeless  
Veterans  
Reintegra-  
tion  
Program  
(HVRP)

Dept. of  
Labor  
Employ-  
ment  
Workshop  
(DOLEW)

USERRA,  
Veterans  
Preference  
and VEOA  
Inv.

National  
Veterans  
Training  
Institute  
(NVTI)



# ***VETS' Employment Services for Homeless Veterans***

- **Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)**
  - Provides job training, counseling, and placement services to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force
    - \$38.1M
    - 156 HVRP grants
    - 17,039 participants
    - Average Annual Placement Rate 69%
- **Homeless Female Veterans and Veterans with Families Program (HFVWWF)**
  - Grantees provide supportive services to eligible homeless female veterans and homeless veterans with families
    - \$3.5M for 18 HFVWWF grants
- **Stand-Down Grants**
  - \$600K for 85 Stand Downs



# *What is an American Job Center?*

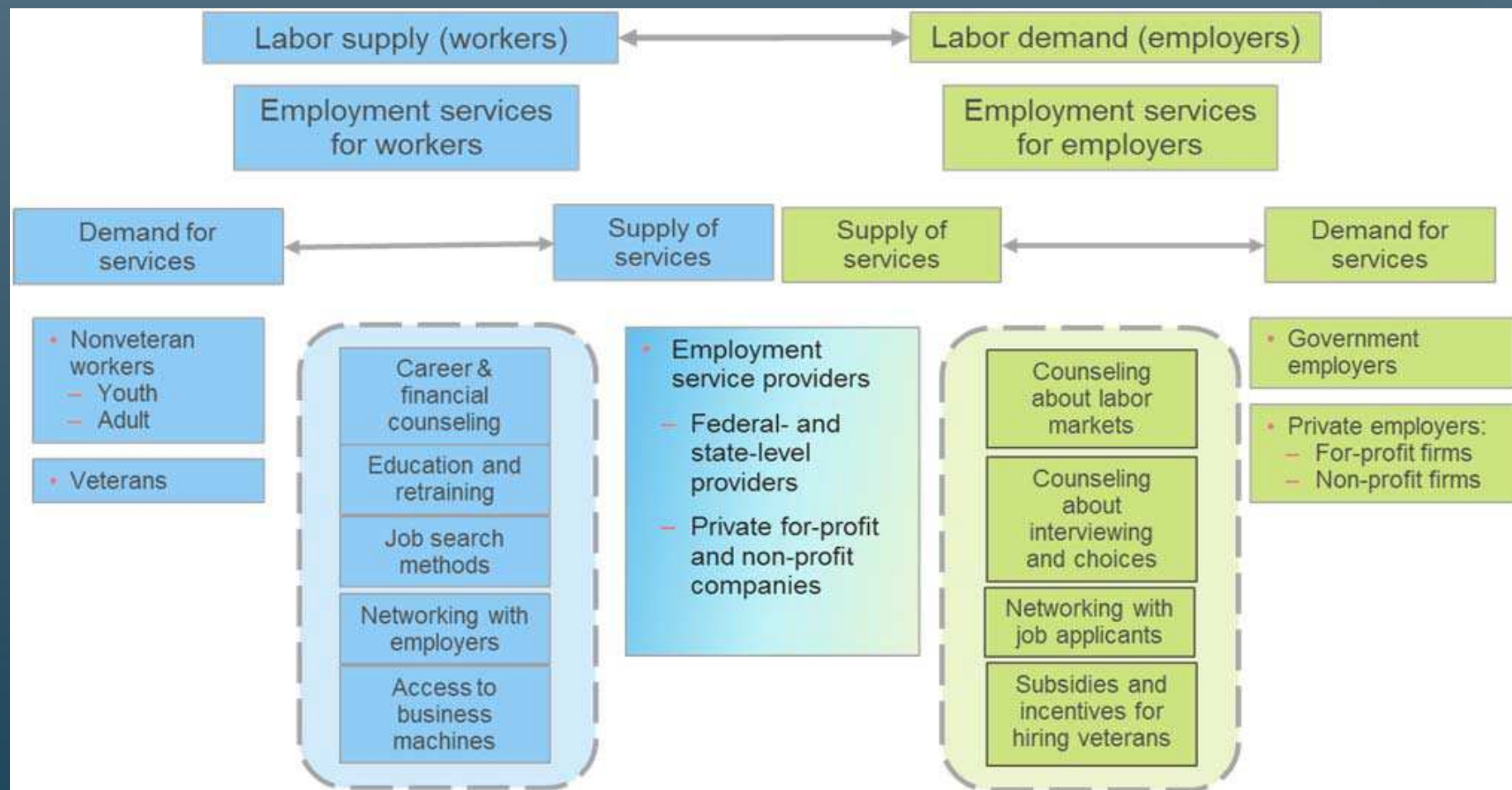
The American Job Centers (AJC) are the centerpiece of veterans' employment services in all the localities. These are funded by the Department of Labor, administered by state-level Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), and operated by local communities.

AJC provides comprehensive services to both employers and job seekers. It serves as the central location for HR Managers to meet and communicate with job seekers to match them to their current openings. It is also the central point in the local community where customers (both veteran and nonveteran job seekers and employers) can access employment insurance, labor market information, employment/skill assessment services, and direct referrals to job training and job opportunities within their communities.



# The AJC Concept

The AJC concept for connecting workers and employers in the job market



*AJCs assisted 14 million job seekers last year... nearly 1 million were veterans.*



# AJC Job Seeker Services

- ❖ **Veterans** receive “**priority of service**” at all Department of Labor employment and job-training programs, including AJCs
- ❖ **Other than Dishonorable** discharges are eligible for DVOPS services; those with a dishonorable discharge can use normal American Job Center services
- ❖ **Post-9/11 Era Veterans** are eligible to receive **Gold Card services** (6 months)
- ❖ **Dislocated Workers:** Service members with a separation date may qualify for dislocated worker programs operated by AJCs

## Career Services:

### Core Services

- Determination of eligibility for services
- Outreach, intake and orientation
- Initial assessment of skills, abilities, aptitudes and service needs
- Job search and placement
- Provision of workforce information
- Job placement follow-up

### Intensive Services

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skills and service needs
- Development of individual employment plans
- Employment counseling and career planning
- Case management
- Prevocational or pre-training short-term skill development services

### Training Services

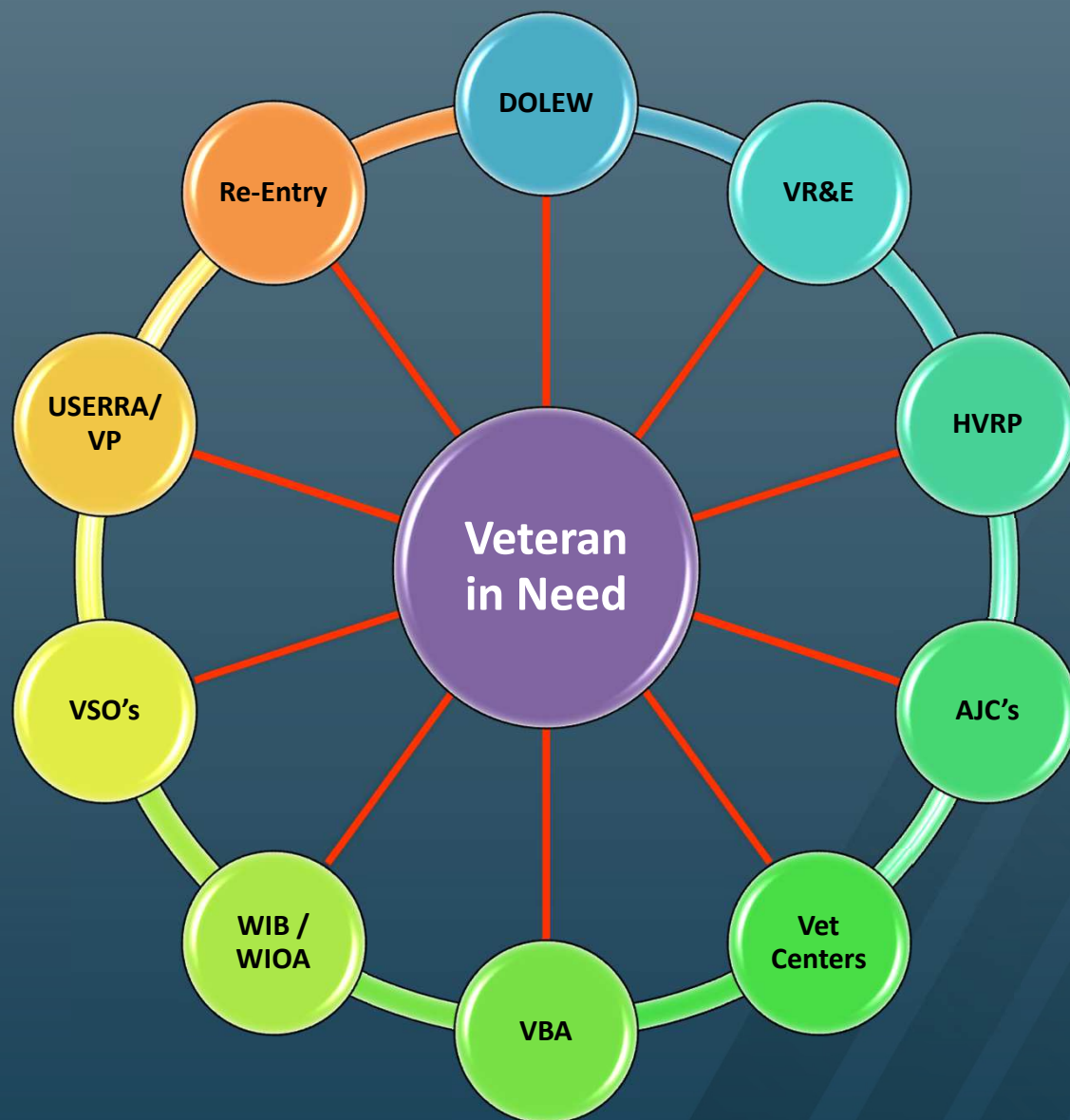
- Occupational skills
- Skill upgrading and retraining
- On-the-job training
- Workplace training combined with related instruction
- Entrepreneurial
- Job readiness training
- Adult education and literacy





# *Strategic Service Model*

**A *No  
Wrong  
Door***  
Approach  
to Serving  
Veterans





# *Points of Collaboration*

## **HVRP/IVTP/HFVVWF**

- Robust outreach to veterans
- Dedicated training funds for veterans
- Flexibility in employment options and education options
- Access to supportive services funded in the community (*CoC, SSVF, VASH, NDWG, Legal Aid, Addiction Counseling & Treatment, Health Care for the Homeless, and more*)
- Advocacy with employers for ex-offenders and vets with other barriers
- Less geographic restrictions to job development

## **JVSG/WP/WIOA**

- Subsidize training approved through WIOA
- Intensive Service staff whom can spend significant time working on barriers
- Staffed resource rooms and computer labs
- Increased Coordination with VA's VR&E program
- Centralized locations to conduct enrollment into all programs
- Easier access to Federal Bonding
- Access to state and regional coordinated hiring efforts



# *Challenges*

- Staying focused on continuous improvement
- Turnover and maintaining relationships
- Eliminating doubt & fear of partnership
- Developing and improving upon referral systems
- Increasing group knowledge
- Overcoming geographic competitiveness
- Remaining a positive & neutral ambassador







# *What's Next?*

- AJC enrollment policy began in program year 2016.
- HVRP grantees and AJCs should begin meeting locally.
- VETS staff will facilitate as needed.
- VETS is developing technical assistance tools and training aids.
- The NVTAC can provide technical assistance.



# *Useful Links*



**American Job Centers**

[www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org)

**Veterans' Employment and  
Training Service (VETS)**

[www.dol.gov/vets](http://www.dol.gov/vets)

[www.veterans.gov](http://www.veterans.gov)

**National Veterans' Technical  
Assistance Center**

[www.nvtac.org](http://www.nvtac.org)

**Veterans Employment Center**

[www.vets.gov](http://www.vets.gov)

*Questions?*

