Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)

Operation PAVE:
Paving Access for Veterans Employment

A non-traditional Approach to Vocational Rehabilitation
DISCLOSURES

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• JOAN HASKINS, MA, CRC, ABVE
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• JAMES ARNDT, MS, CRC, LPC
  • Has no financial interest or relationships to disclose
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the purpose of Vocational Rehabilitation.
2. Understand why Operation PAVE is different and why it is needed.
3. Understand the positive impact PAVE can make to veterans.
PRESENTERS

KEISHA C. WRIGHT, MS, CRC
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for Paralyzed Veterans of America in San Antonio, Texas
- Over 9 years of experience in vocational rehabilitation counseling in the public (state and federal) and non-profit sectors

JOAN HASKINS, MA, CRC, ABVE
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) for Paralyzed Veterans of America in Long Beach, California
- Over 30 years of vocational rehabilitation counseling experience in the public (state), private and non-profit sectors

JAMES ARNDT, MS, CRC, LPC
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for Paralyzed Veterans of America in Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Over 20 years of experience in mental health, independent living, and vocational rehabilitation counseling in the private and non-profit sectors
WHAT IS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION?

*Vocational Rehabilitation: the restoration of someone to a useful place in society [by] providing training in a specific trade with the aim of gaining employment

* [Vocational Rehabilitation](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/vocational+rehabilitation)
Operation PAVE

Mission:

To improve the productivity and employment rates of veterans with Spinal Cord Injury / Spinal Cord Disease (SCI/SCD) so that they have an opportunity to:

- Achieve a satisfactory quality of life that allows full participation in society
- Improve and maintain an effective level of psychosocial adjustment
- Contribute their talents to the work force
- Achieve better financial security
Who We Serve

PRIMARY FOCUS: VETERANS

- Disabled (Service-Connected and Non-Service Connected)
- Unemployed
- Under-employed

SECONDARY FOCUS: Veteran Supports

- Spouses
- Dependents
- Care givers
Why is PAVE Necessary?

- Of the more than 250,000 Americans with serious SCIs and disorders, about 42,000 are veterans. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provided a full range of care to nearly 26,000 veterans with SCIs and disorders in 2006 and SCI specialty care to about 13,000 of these veterans.

- Studies show that employment rates for veterans with SCI range from 20% to 28%

20% - 28% Employment! Why?

- Financial disincentives
  - SSI / SSDI, VA compensation, Workers Compensation

- Employer Fear
  - Liability risks, extra expenses, uncomfortable with disabilities, afraid of being sued (discrimination, injury)

- Accessibility issues
  - Transportation, Work site, Poor knowledge of Adaptive Technology

- Low / no expectation after catastrophic injury
  - Vet, support system, rehabilitation team.
Vocational Rehabilitation Model

- Application Phase
- Evaluation Phase
- Services determined by VRC and client
- Services begin
- Job Obtained or Services discontinued
- Follow up services
- Services end / Case closed

If additional services are needed, the process begins again
PAVE Approach

- **Active outreach** and solicited referrals
- **Inclusive clientele**: All veterans, spouses, dependents, and care providers qualify
- **Fully integrated team** (VRC, employer, client family, doctors, therapists, etc. as appropriate to each case)
- **Continuous services** until client is satisfied.
- After employment **Job Support services**
- **Job Mediation and Advocacy**
- **Career Advancement Services**
We Change Expectations

- **Fast integration** - change expectations ASAP after SCI
- **Active Outreach** - We develop contacts, events, and action groups to identify candidates and encourage them to see their potential
- **Family integration** - We identify family support systems and employment services family members might need
- **Medical participation** - PAVE counselors work closely with medical staff and encourage discussions with hospitalized veterans
Operation PAVE’s mission is being accomplished through the integration/coordination of services available through the numerous vocational rehabilitation service-providers and community partners such as:

- VA Veterans Health Administration (VHA)
- VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)
- State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs
- Department of Labor (DOL) funded Programs
- Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Advocacy Programs
- Community-Based Organizations
- Corporate Entities
Employer Services

- PAVE VRC’s work to create strong partnerships with corporate partners to match qualified applicants with career opportunities
- PAVE VRC’s provide briefings to HR and business owners on the benefits of hiring disabled veterans
- PAVE VRC’s conduct on site sensitivity training to HR, managers, and coworkers to teach them how to address or counsel a person with disabilities
- PAVE VRC’s are available to provide training on how to interpret ADA guidelines
- PAVE VRC’s perform work site and ergonomic assessments
Case Study 1
(Return to work after bomb blast)

- Mr. L:
  - 41 year old service-connected disabled U. S. Army veteran
  - Sustained SCI after his patrol vehicle drove over a 300 lb road side bomb in Afghanistan

- Original Outlook
  - Focus was on physical rehabilitation and living with SCI
  - He had no thoughts or plans of returning to work

- Outcome
  - VRC began working with him while he was still in the hospital and on Active Duty
  - He had no thought of returning to work
  - Obtained career with starting salary of $34k
Case Study 2
(Return to Work after 7 years)

- Mr. H:
  - 51 y/o service connected disabled U. S. Navy veteran
  - Pilot, sustained SCI after he ejected from plane
  - BS, Engineering and MBA, International Business
  - He closed his small network security business in 2004 due to poor health

- Original Outlook
  - He wanted to work and considered trade school

- Outcome
  - VRC helped him explore all of his career options
  - Began a new career with a starting salary of $120k in a new city
Mr. H

“I had the necessary skills to work but lacked the confidence to even start a job search. It was working with Joan that gave me the confidence and support I needed to move ahead.”
Case Study 3
(Return to work after severe disabilities)

Mr. F:
- 61 y/o non-service connected disabled U. S. Army veteran
- Served in Vietnam and received no injuries
- He has received a liver transplant, heart surgery and bilateral eye surgeries
- Sustained SCI, total hip replacement, and below knee amputation in 2006 when a drunk driver caused an accident
- He was forced to close his small business of 20 years

Original Outlook
- He wanted to work and sought assistance with a traditional vocational rehabilitation program
- Worked obtained a seasonal job that lasted 2.5 months and was considered rehabilitated and his case was closed
Case Study 3  
(Continued)

- **Outcome**
  - VRC helped him explore all of his career options and expanded his expectations
  - Began a new career with a major company with a starting salary of $65k in a new city with a food stipend, laptop, 3-bedroom apartment and car
"I have learned that nearly everything is possible with the right support and a positive attitude. You have been a bright light in the tunnel. Thank you for all you do for all of us."
Case Study 4
(Maintaining career after SCI)

Mr. W:
- 50 y/o non-service connected disabled U. S. A. F. veteran
- Sustained SCI (C-6 tetraplegic, incomplete) after he lost control of his car
- Worked for a large company, had a large salary and a lavish lifestyle

Original Outlook
- He needed to work to keep his home and possessions

Outcome
- VRC began working with him while he was still in hospital
- VRC coordinated services between PT, OT, traditional vocational rehabilitation program, and his employer
- He was able to keep his $90k career with modified work space
“My PVA voc rehab counselor came to my house, evaluated my needs, and helped me to make a smooth transition from my old office to a home office. Thanks to her, I didn’t miss a beat!”
Case of Mrs. J
(Returning to work after medical retirement)

- **Mrs. J:**
  - 52 y/o 100% service connected disabled U.S.A.F. veteran
  - Considered unemployable because of her multiple disabilities (Lupus, pleurisy, degenerative arthritis,.....)
  - Medically retired in 2004 from IT / customer service

- **Original Outlook**
  - Didn’t think she could work with no degree and dated IT skills
  - Wanted to work because she felt she still had a lot to offer

- **Outcome**
  - VRC helped her to restructure and refresh her resume
  - Began a new career with a starting salary of $27k in her area of interest with opportunities for advancement
Mrs. J
On the Job

“It’s great! I love my job [and] being able to help other veterans has always been a dream of mine. PVA voc rehab really helped me to fulfill a dream that I though was lost.”
Conclusion

PAVE: Paving Access to Veteran Employment

- Changing expectations after injury
- Efficient utilization/integration of Community Resources
- Strong Community And Corporate Partners
- Using Non-traditional Vocational Rehabilitation Methods
- Meeting the Veterans Where They Are
Contact Information

To find out more about the Vocational Rehabilitation Services program, contact our Veterans Benefits Department:
Voice: 800-424-8200
TTY: 800-795-4327
info@pva.org

Or go to:
www.pva.org/site/c.ajIRK9NJLcJ2E/b.6306253/k.75A2/Vocational_Rehabilitation.htm
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Obtaining CME Credit

- If you would like to receive CME credit for this activity, please visit:

  http://www.pesgce.com/PVAsummit2001/

- This information can also be found in the Summit 2011 program on page 8.
Questions