



Association of VA Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals

Newsletter



www.avavrp.org

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Greetings from the President

BY ROB DENNIS

For the AVAVRP, one of the goals is to ensure that we continue to bring awareness to others regarding the vocational rehabilitation counseling profession. Another is to be an active participant, if possible, in any decision-making process that can impact the profession. The Association of VA Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals (AVAVRP) helps veterans by serving as the center piece of a measuring scale to aid a balance between veterans' talents, and the VA Vocational Systems and Processes. As such, we strive to be and hope to reflect action, not just words. We encourage current and potential members to engage, too, national, locally, and departmentally. We welcome and encourage VA Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals to: Join Us [AVAVRP]: There are "strengths in numbers." And, be active by serving in different roles; Support your peers by recognizing their good work; Nominate peers who reflect the VA Core Values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence. Send it to us so that we can highlight that person; Volunteer: As a team, or individually, volunteer beyond your division, to interact, share, and learn more about the needs and "best practices" to serve Veterans and Servicemembers, via VA Voluntary Service; Join VAPulse to connect and collaborate with professionals cross disciplines; Submit write-ups/stories to us regarding your best practices. Advancing innovations in our field is important to AVARP. It is our hope that through our collaborative efforts more opportunities will be presented to rehabilitation professionals

Inside This Issue

Greetings from the President

Innovations from the Field

The Shrouded Trauma of Moral Injury

AVAVRP Past, Present & Future

AVAVRP Spotlight

2018-2020 AVAVRP Executive Board



Innovations from the Field

FEATURING DAVID TESHEIRA



Adapting the philosophy of "together everyone accomplishes more" Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist David Tesheira of the Baltimore, MD VHA Therapeutic and Supported Employment Services (TSES) Program identified, based on vocational assessments, there was a growing need for VRS to provide assistance to Veterans who wished to start their own small business or who wished to bring their business ideas to fruition. Tesheira realized that a vital part of this assistance would be to provide an avenue for Veterans to obtain entrepreneurial training. To meet the needs of this segment of the Veteran population, Tesheira collaborated with Project Opportunity. Project Opportunity is a non-profit organization based on the Eastern Shore that trains Veterans to be successful business owners; it is the only free entrepreneurship training program for Veterans in Maryland. Thru this collaboration, Tesheira along with the Vocational Employment Taskforce successfully wrote and obtained a \$5,000 grant from the VA Maryland Health Care System's Mental Illness Research Education Clinical, Center (MIRECC). The grant resulted in a 10-week, 30-hour rigorous course that gives Veterans the tools and know-how they needed to launch a successful business. The course—conducted on a pilot basis at the Baltimore VA Medical Center—consisted of a series of three-hour-long workshops that helped Veterans determine why they want to start a business, learn characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, take self-assessments, participate in focused training in concrete skills, assess business ideas and business planning, and other elements required to maintain a successful business. The first fourteen Veterans graduated from the pilot course in May, with business plans ready to launch an array of businesses such as a pest control company, a catering company, a clothing store, a media production company, a children's book industry, an asphalt paving company, a computer networking company, a lead testing company, and a deck power cleaning company, among others. CWT Supported Self Employment is a service available for implementation by CWT Programs, as rolled out during the 2016 Transformation Plan. Programs interested in implementing CWT Supported Self Employment can find training resources on the TSES Guide SharePoint site.

Several graduates have reported on goal accomplishments, and have credited the entrepreneurial training for its contributions. Hence one veteran formed Braswell Testing LLC which became certified by State of Maryland as a Lead Visual Inspector; another formed Betz Biz Enterprises, and received \$250,000 in grant funding; A food service business was launched by one graduate; Another formed a partnership (Green Gap Solutions) with two Prime Contractors currently awaiting decision on two formal bid submissions, and another was selected to receive \$10,000 in targeted capital from the Global Good Fund & Smithfield Foundation to invigorate its leadership growth.

The Shrouded Trauma of Moral Injury

By **Kris Manley, LMSW, VA North Texas, TSES**

According to Psychiatrist Jonathan Shay (2014) moral injury is a distinct and complex condition of shame and survivor guilt experienced by combat service members who have transgressed their own moral values in war. Though the condition of moral injury is not a new concept it has emerged as a significant war trauma only recently recognized by the VHA. It is often masked by symptoms associated with PTSD and thus overlooked. Moral injury can be a component of PTSD but is embedded in shame, guilt, loss and grief, rather than fear. It is not a “disorder”. For some service members or Veterans it represents their primary trauma. Essentially, moral injury involves several issues: guilt associated with killing another human being; survivor guilt; “Witness” guilt; & culture values conflict (civilian culture vs. military culture; military moral code vs. civilian moral code) to name a few.

Integration back into the civilian sector for many becomes a battle in and of itself, with no hope of recapturing noble values once held. Pioneer researchers in moral injury recognized this and introduced trials of Adaptive Disclosure to active military between deployments. Though brief, these sessions went deeper than simply normalizing emotions within the context of combat. Therapists actively engaged service members to identify and process target events, summarize insights gained and adaptively prepare for the next deployment. Positive outcomes of this intervention led to the authoring and publishing of the book *Adaptive Disclosure, Treatment Approach for Military Trauma, Loss and Moral Injury* (2016). Adaptive Disclosure incorporates techniques of Gestalt, modified CPT, guided imagery, and cognitive restructuring to promote healing and self-forgiveness. Adaptive Disclosure provides an experiential milieu to evoke mindful disclosure and processing of morally injurious events, and to develop trust. Providers offer remedial feedback in response to self-destructive blame, tools for adaptive recovery and reconciliation of one’s identity as service member/Veteran/civilian. **referenced book is authored by PhD’s B. Litz, L. Lebowitz & M.J Gray, and USMC Psychiatrist W.P. Nash**



When our service members return home to civilian life they can bring all these conflicts with them. If left unresolved the struggles are manifested in depression, self-condemnation and “need” to suffer; anger, substance use/addiction, isolation, suicidality. Adjustment to and from military life doesn’t come with a societal on/off switch. Integration back into the civilian sector for many becomes a battle in and of itself, with no hope of recapturing noble values once held.

AVAVRP Past, Present & Future



The Association of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals (AVAVRP) was formed in 2013. Since its formation, AVAVRP has served a pivotal role in shaping and influencing the future of the VA rehabilitation profession through networking, creating opportunities, and promoting further development through formal and informal education. Did you know that in 2015, AVARP spearheaded a movement to promote the hiring of experienced and/or credentialed VRC's and VRS' for VHA VR positions; AVAVRP also submitted a letter to VACO TSES Program Office to support their efforts in conversion of VRC 101 occupational series to Hybrid Title 38; the workgroup chartered by VACO TSES included several members of AVAVRP; the creation of AVAVRP LinkedIn group; led by Rob Dennis, AVARP spearheaded an investigation into state licensure requirements of Masters level, CRC VR personnel to strengthen VR positions within the VHA. And in 2016, recruited members as Subject Matter Experts to work with the developers of MyCareerVA to edit/provide information about the Vocational Rehabilitation career field within VHA and VBA; provided/ disseminated a national resource to members on Supported Self-Employment, a 13 year old non-profit charity organization which educates and assists Veterans to become entrepreneurs; created AVAVRP group on VA Pulse; created a subcommittee to market material which promoted the hiring/ capabilities of VRS/ VRC within the VA; and lastly provided free continuing education/ presentation to members from NCRE past president- this presentation was important because it provided VRC/ VRS personnel with relevant information about professional identity and trends within VR profession.

FREE CRCC CEU:
Since 2014
AVAVRP has
provided free
continuing
education/
presentations to
members on
Supported
Employment
best practices
for VR in VHA.

AVAVRP Spotlight

A History of National Rehabilitation Counselors Appreciation Day

by Dru Fentem, RCEA President

National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day first showed up on the calendar as a result of Senate Resolution 120, in 2007, sponsored by Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), cosponsored by Senator Mary Landreau (D-LA). They also cosponsored SR 487, maintaining the day in 2008. The third year, HR 247 was introduced in the House, sponsored by the late Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO).

The intent was to express support for the designation of "National Rehabilitation Counselors Appreciation Day", which commended all of the hard work and dedication that Rehabilitation Counselors provide to individuals with disabilities, and the numerous efforts made to assist those who require rehabilitation.

Why March 22nd?

Dr. Martha Lentz Walker, President of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education testified before Congress on March 22, 1983 about "the need for Rehabilitation Counselors to be qualified, leading to the enactment of laws that now require Rehabilitation Counselors to have proper credentials in order to provide a higher level of quality of service to those in need."



For more information, visit www.rceapro.org

While today is your day to be celebrated, we'd like to take a moment to remember those who fought so hard to set the standards we uphold today.

Thank your mentor, thank your support staff, and most of all, be a positive example for those considering a career in this field we love.

Free CRC CEU Resources:

<http://ktdrr.org/training/CRC-CEUs.html> (9.5)

<http://blind.msstate.edu/training/training/> (approx 25)

<http://interwork.sdsu.edu/sp/ntc/online-training-and-crc-credit/> (approx 30)

<https://www.counseling.org/continuing-education/free-ce-of-the-month>

CEU resources provided by AVAVRP for informational purposes; no endorsement is intended



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