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HVRP VETERAN INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Hello, it's nice to meet you. Let me start off by thanking you for your service to our country.

My name is _____. I work for _____, an independent research organization. I do not work for any of the agencies that might be providing you with assistance. This interview is for me and the research team to learn about your experiences with the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP), which you might know better as <local program name>. We are collecting this information as part of a study funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The purpose of the study is to understand how the program helps veterans like you.

Do you have any questions about my organization or my affiliation with the local programs?

The interview will last about an hour and a half. I will be asking questions about your military experience, your housing and work situation, your thoughts on <the program> and the services you received, and what might be helpful to you in the future. Your participation in this interview is voluntary, and you can choose to not answer any questions and you can stop the interview at any time. I want to repeat that we do not work for any of the agencies running this program, and, if you choose to participate in this study, we will never give your individual answers to anyone outside the research team. Your participation will in no way affect your employment services, or other services you may be receiving, and is very important to our work to improve programs for veterans.

Please remember that we are interested in your experiences and opinions; there are no right or wrong answers. My hope is that you will feel comfortable talking with me, but, if at any time I ask you a question and you don't feel comfortable talking about the topic, feel free to say so and we will move on. You will receive \$50 for the time you have taken to participate.

After the interview, we will type up the notes and make transcripts of the discussion. Should the Department of Labor request to see any of our notes or transcripts, we will remove all personally identifying information to prevent those outside the research team from knowing who provided the information. The de-identified information may also be included in a report. The information you provide will be kept private and only used for this study to the extent allowed by the Privacy Act of 1974.

This is a chance, however, to have your voice and opinions heard.

Before we begin, I need to go over this consent form with you. It gives you more information about the research study and a telephone number you can call if you have questions later.

[Read consent form, include consent for recording]

Do you have any questions? [If agreed to recording, begin recording now]

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1.5 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is voluntary. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Chiefevaluationoffice@DOL.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1290-XXXX. Comments can also be mailed to: U.S. Department of Labor, Chief Evaluation Office, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, S-2312, Washington, DC 20210. **Note:** Please do not return the completed interview guide to the email or mailing address.

A. Introduction

- I'd like to start with your military service. Can you tell me a little about it?
 - What branch of service were you in?
 - When did you start your military service?
 - How long did you serve?
 - Where did you serve?
 - What were your main duties did you do?
 - How many tours of duty?
 - And, how long has it been since you left the military?
- Can you tell me about where you are living right now?
 - How long you have been living there?
 - How long do you expect to stay there?
 - Who, if anyone, do you live with?
 - How, if at all, has your situation changed since the pandemic?
- Are you currently working? [AND] Are you in an educational or training program?
 - How long have you been doing this work/in program?
 - Where are you working/ participating in the program? Who is the provider/employer?
 - What are you doing at this job/in this program?
 - How many hours per week do you spend on job/program?
 - o How, if at all, has that changed with the pandemic or stay-at-home orders?
 - Are you able to complete your work/program hours from your home or are you still reporting to your workplace/program?
 - o [If remotely] What have been the challenges of working/participating remotely?
 - o [If reporting to a physical location] What are the challenges of reporting to the location? Probes: transportation availability, protective gear at work
 - Do you expect employment/program to continue? If yes, for how long?

- If not currently working:
 - How long has it been since you last worked?
 - Were you working before the pandemic/stay-at-home order [depending on state in which veteran resides]?
 - o If yes, what were you doing? How long were you employed? How many hours per week?
 - o Were you able to access unemployment benefits when you stopped working?
 - What have been the biggest challenges to finding employment? In what ways, if any, has the pandemic affected these challenges?
 - o Probe: Is lack of housing a challenge to finding and keeping employment?
 - o Probe: Is lack of transportation a challenge to finding and keeping employment?
 - o Probe: Is your health a challenge to finding and keeping employment?
 - o Probe: Is using substances a challenge to finding employment?
 - o Probe: Is having a criminal record a challenge to finding and keeping employment?
 - What types of jobs are you looking for?

B. Reasons for homelessness and pathways to HVRP

Employment and housing history

- Can you tell me more about your work history before you were in the military?
 - What types of jobs did you have?
 - Did you receive any promotions or advance in your positions prior to the military?
- What types of jobs and tasks did you complete while in the military?
 - How long were you in these roles while in the military?
 - Did you receive any promotions/advancements in your roles in the military?
- Now, can you tell me more about your work history after you were in the military?
 - [If working currently] What kind of work are you doing?
 - o How long have you been in your current position?
 - o Have you received any promotions or raises in this position?
 - What other types of jobs have you had since you left the military?
- [For veterans who exited military long ago] Did you have trouble accessing the civilian job market when you first exited the military or did your challenges with employment start later?
 - Please describe some of the big challenges you have faced since leaving the military.
 - Probe specifically on trouble finding and maintaining housing and employment

- Probe on health / disability challenges
- Probe on family issues
- [For veterans who left the military long ago and/or have history of housing/employment/health challenges] Focusing on the last 1-2 years, what has been the most challenging for you in maintaining housing/employment/health?
 - When did you start to have housing struggles or experience homelessness?
 - Was this prior to leaving the military? How soon after leaving the military?
 - What do you think was the primary reason you ultimately became homeless?
- Did you receive employment assistance prior to <the program>? From who? For how long?
 - [If answers with HVRP grantee information] Any employment assistance from another program prior? What type of assistance?
- [If currently homeless] What types of assistance have you received since becoming homeless? [If not currently homeless] During your previous experience of homelessness, what types of assistance did you receive?
 - Did you receive housing/rent assistance? From who? For how long?
 - Any other types of assistance?

HVRP program

- How did you hear about <the program>?
 - Did another agency refer you to <the program>? Which one? [VA, SSVF, AJC, local vets organization, other?]
 - Did a friend recommend it? What did he/she say?
 - Did a <program> staff person approach you about it?
 - What interested you about the program?
- What did you hope the program could do for you? How could it help?
- What is your understanding of who is eligible to enroll in <the program>?
 - Were you worried you may not be eligible? Why?
 - Were you worried about how it might affect your participation in other services? Why?
- Can you describe the enrollment process?
 - Did you have an interview where they asked you questions about your housing and employment experience? What was that like?
 - Did you need to complete a survey or an assessment about your housing and employment?
 - Do you feel like that interview helped get you the services you need?

C. Experiences with HVRP, services received, and effectiveness of those services

- [If not already known] When did you first begin participating in <the program>?
- Were you assigned a case worker who has served as your point of contact for the program?
 - [If yes] How often do/did you meet with the person? Where do/did those meetings occur? What kinds of things do/did you talk about/do in those meetings?
 - o During stay-at-home orders, how did you meet with your case worker? Prompt: Did you connect by telephone or video conference?
 - What did you like about connecting with your case worker in this way?
 - What did you dislike or what was harder about meeting that way?
 - Is there something more that you needed from your case worker that you were not able to get because of communicating by phone or video?
 - Are any other staff from other agencies present for these discussions or conferences?
 - Were/Are those meetings helpful/valuable? If yes, in what ways? If not, why not?
 - [If no] How are/were you connected to the program? Who is/was your primary point of contact? Did they reach out to contact you? Or, are/were you supposed to reach out and contact them?
- Did you and program staff write an Individual Employment Plan for you? What was/is in your plan? What goals and responsibilities are outlined in the plan? Did your case manager ask you to sign the plan?
 - How did your Individual Employment Plan change as a result of the pandemic and/or stay-at-home orders?
- What types of employment-related services have you participated in as part of <the program>?
 - Types of services to probe on: counseling, money management classes, trainings and workshops, apprenticeships and on the job training?
 - o If training, for what occupation?
 - o Assistance with accessing tools, certificates, or uniforms for work?
 - How did your access to these services change as a result of the pandemic/stay-at-home orders?
 - Are/were you receiving the services from other programs? If yes, did <the program> provide a referral or connection to that program?
 - o Probe: Assistance with transportation or rides? For what types of meetings was this assistance provided?

- Have you participated in any activities/services through the local <American Job Center>? Please describe your experiences there.
 - Were you connected to the center through <the program> or had you visited an AJC before?
 - How long have you been getting help from the AJC?
 - What type of services did (have) you receive? Were they helpful?
 - Did the availability of any of these services change as a result of the pandemic or stay-at-home orders?
 - Who are you working with there? Do you have a specific point of contact there?
- What services have you received from the VA? Which are you currently receiving?
 - Probe: health care; employment assistance; housing; other
 - Did the availability of any of these services change as a result of the pandemic or stay-at-home orders? Were you unable to access services you needed at any point?
 - Does your HVRP case manager talk with the VA staff about your needs or progress?
- I am interested in learning about other types of assistance you have received – from <the program> and other programs. What types of assistance have you received?
 - Probe: Unemployment benefits?
 - Probe: Housing assistance programs?
 - Probe: Health related programs?
 - Probe: Other programs?
- Did you find any of these services or assistance on your own or were any helping you before you started working with <the program>?
- Which of these, if any, has <the program> referred you to or helped you access?
 - [If referrals] How were those referrals or connections made?
 - o Did the HVRP program provide you with contact information for the other program(s)?
 - o Did they go with you?
 - o Did they follow up with you or the program to find out if you went?
- Which of the types of assistance you have received have been helpful?
- What types of services are available after you got a job through <the program>? For how long?
 - How did you find out about these services?
 - o Do you know who you can reach out to at <the program> for those services? Would you feel comfortable doing so?

- [If already employed] How have you used these services? Have they been helpful?
- If you lost your job as a result of the pandemic or stay-at-home orders, have ongoing services from <the program> been helpful? How?

D. Impact of HVRP

- How has your situation changed since starting <the program>?
 - Probe for housing security, job skills/employment, mental and physical health, benefit receipt, financial situation, family situation, education
 - Probe on changes before and after the pandemic
 - [If found employment] How did finding work change your daily life?
 - o Are you able to afford things that you couldn't before?—what type of things?
 - o How has yours (and your family's—if appropriate) daily routine changed?
 - o What challenges have these changes brought about?
 - o Probe on changes before and after the pandemic
- Looking back, which aspects of <the program> do you think have been most helpful in getting you to this point?
 - Probe for services stated received from above section: case management, employment services, referrals
 - Do you feel that these services have improved your future? Why or why not?
 - If so, how have they made your employment or housing situation more stable?
 - Would you come back again for services if you again found yourself homeless?
- Did you experience any challenges working with <the program>? If so, could you describe them?
 - What could the program have done differently so that you didn't have this challenge?
- Are there additional types of help you wish <the program> could provide you?
 - Are there services you need that are not available in your community?
- [If employed or employed immediately prior to COVID-19 pandemic] Can you tell me some of the good things about your work/job (or the work/job you held before pandemic/stay-at-home order)?
 - Are you happy with the type of work you are/were doing?
 - Are/were you happy with your salary? Working conditions?
 - How does/did this compare to previous jobs?
 - What are things you would like to see change about your current/pre-pandemic job?
 - Is there anything that makes/made you want to leave your current/prior job?

- Do/did you see opportunities to advance in your current position, or move forward in a career path?
- [If employed] To what extent, do you think <the program> helped you to become employed?
- If <the program> were not here, do you know of other programs or services that might have been available to help you be ready for work and/or help you find a job?
 - What has been your experience with those programs in the past?
 - Would you go back to those programs now since being in <the program>?

E. Wrap up

- In what ways, if any, would you say that <the program> has affected your current employment and housing situation? How has it helped? How has it not helped?
 - How about long term?
 - Do you think that being a part of the program helped you be prepared to handle the pandemic or stay-at-home orders?
- Has the change in your circumstances impacted your relationship with family members? Friends? Significant others? (better, worse, same)
- What are some of your overall thoughts of <the program>?
 - What do you think has been the most helpful thing <the program> has provided you? Why?
 - Are there services that <the program> provides that you don't think are helpful? Why?
 - Is there a service you need that <the program> has not able to provide you? Please explain. Were you able to access that service elsewhere in the community? If yes, did <the program> provide you with a referral?
- If you could make any changes to <the program>, what would they be?
- Would you recommend this program to a fellow veteran? Why or why not?
- What types of services may be helpful to you as you gain more employment experience and skills in the future?
- Is there anything about your experience with <the program> that I should know about that I have not already asked you?

Thank you