



## **ADA Live! Episode 111: Supporting Our Veterans: Tips for Job Seekers and Returning Workers**

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**Guests:**

- Keith Hosey, Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Louisville.
- Anne-Marie Nelson, National Vocational Rehabilitation Planning Specialist VHA Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Service Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Department of Veteran Affairs, Washington, DC.
- Joseph Carlomagno, National Community Employment Programs Specialist, VHA Vocational Rehabilitation, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Department of Veteran Affairs, Washington, DC.

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**Recording:** [adalive.org/episodes/episode-111/](https://adalive.org/episodes/episode-111/)

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**Keith Hosey:**

Hi, I'm Keith Hosey.

**Anne-Marie Nelson:** Hi, I'm Anne-Marie Nelson.

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:** And I'm Joe Carlomagno and you're listening to ADA Live!.

**4 Wheel City:** Yo. Hi, let's roll (singing)

**Barry Whaley:**

Hi, everybody. On behalf of the Southeast ADA Center, the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University, and the ADA National Network, I want to welcome you to this episode of ADA Live!. I'm Barry Whaley and I'm the Director at the Southeast ADA Center. Listening audience, if you have questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act, you can use our online form at [adalive.org](http://adalive.org), or you can call the Southeast ADA Center at 404-541-9001.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 4.9 million veterans or about 27% have a service connected disability. As these veterans return to civilian life, some will want to return to jobs they had before entering military, but others will search for new jobs. In recognition of Veterans Day and in honor of our military veterans, in this episode, we discuss veterans employment and the challenges that some veterans face in returning to the civilian workforce. To discuss this topic, we welcome Keith Hosey, a Supervisory Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist at the US Department of Veterans Affairs in Louisville, Kentucky. Anne-Marie Nelson, who works at the National Vocational Rehabilitation, Planning Specialist at the VHA Vocational Rehabilitation Service Office for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention within the Department of Veterans Affairs. And we also welcome Joseph Carlomagno, he's a National Community Employment Program Specialist at the VHA Vocational Rehabilitation Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Department of Veteran Affairs. Everybody, welcome to the show. I'm glad you're here. Let's get started. Tell me what types of employment assistance the VA can offer veterans with disabilities?

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

I think in order to answer that question, it's important to provide a brief overview of the VA's organizational structure, to better understand Veterans Affairs and all it has to offer with employment assistance. The organizational structure of the VA consists of three administrations. First you have Veterans Health Administration, VHA, Veterans Benefits Administration, VBA, and the National Cemetery Administration NCA, BHA and VBA, so Health Administration and Benefits Administration both offer vocational rehabilitation

services to veterans, which makes it confusing to those outside of our organization. To briefly describe the most basic difference between these two, Voc Rehab programs, VHA is a benefit of the Veterans healthcare, eligibility is based on a therapeutic need. And VBA is an entitlement program, eligibility is based on a service connected disability. Joe and I are both from the VHA Voc Rehab national office, so we'll be more talking about VHA Voc Rehab.

**Barry Whaley:**

Which again, that's the health benefit, not the other program you had mentioned?

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

Correct.

**Barry Whaley:**

Okay. Joe or Keith, you have anything to add to that?

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:**

First, we're really happy to be here today to talk to you about our programs and I think when we think about difference in between VHA and VBA, in VHA, our programs tend to provide clinical support and individuals who can help veterans find employment, boots on the ground, if you will, will meet with veterans and will connect them with employers. And where VBA tends to be more of the benefits and educational benefits, that sort of thing.

**Barry Whaley:**

Is veterans benefits, is that a means tested program? How do you qualify for that Anne-Marie?

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

Veterans benefits is that entitlement program based on a service connected disability. The veteran's healthcare is based on a veteran who is eligible to receive their healthcare through the VA. They would be eligible for Voc Rehab services through our program.

**Barry Whaley:**

And would that include both people with service connected as well as non-service connected disability?

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

Correct.

**Barry Whaley:**

Okay, very good. Now I get it.

**Keith Hosey:**

If I can jump in, the flip side there, the VBA, it is primarily based on service connection, whereas the healthcare side, we serve veterans with some service connected disabilities for sure, but also with non-service connected impairments and illnesses.

**Barry Whaley:**

Right. Maybe we need to discuss what's the difference between a service connected disability and a non-service connected disability.

**Keith Hosey:**

I think there's a lot of confusion out there around this, especially in the non-veteran population. But essentially a service connected disability is something that happened while you were in the service, either an illness or an injury that happened during your service or someone's service has exasperated an illness or disability that they already had. That's the difference when we talk about service connected. Now, many people, as you know, all over the world, not just veterans, tend to acquire disabilities, especially as

they age, so we are also serving many veterans who have various disabilities that are not connected to their service.

**Barry Whaley:**

Maybe if you could tell us a little bit more about the VHA Vocational Rehabilitation program. What does it do, how does it operate, that sort of thing.

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

I'll start us off and then the rest can jump in. Again, VHA Voc Rehab, sometimes it's referred to as Compensated Work Therapy or CWT, and it's housed under the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. With that being said, it's a clinical service, it's a recovery program, if you will. It's provided to veterans who have barriers to employment, whether it be, obtaining or maintaining employment due to functional impairments of a disability or a psychosocial situation such as homelessness or being justice involved, some barrier to employment. And since Voc Rehab, it's in the medical center, it's a health care, it's not your traditional voc rehab. We are very clinically based and when we talk about CWT, your Compensated Work Therapy, there's several programs underneath that umbrella that were designed to meet veterans' specific needs, depending on what their barriers are and what their vocational goals are.

I can go through a number of the different programs underneath the VHA Voc Rehab or CWT umbrella. The first program is a mandated service for all Voc Rehab at each medical center, it's called a Transitional Work program, sometimes referred to as TW. The goal of Transitional Work is to provide a therapeutic work setting by securing a structured, safe and supportive placement opportunity for veterans, so that they can work on their recovery and address the issues that brought them to the VA in the first place. The Voc Rehab staff develop these therapeutic work sites. They go into what we call an MOA, Memorandum Of Agreement with community and VA work sites and develop these work sites, build a collaborative relationship with the supervisors in order to place veterans in those work sites.

The Transitional Work program, it's important to know, is not considered competitive employment. There is no employer employee relationship. It's simply there to help address whatever therapeutic issues the veteran came in with. It's there to provide more of that soft skill or that work adjustment training type of clinical intervention to address those work behaviors, so veterans can work on those job keeping skills. Voc Rehab staff in Transitional Work, work collaboratively, like I said, with those work site supervisors, obtaining the necessary feedback from those work sites in order to provide that to the veteran to build on those skills to develop a positive work reference when they're ready to look for competitive employment.

**Barry Whaley:**

Anne-Marie, are these typically time limited therapeutic work settings?

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

It's transitional, so yes, it's time limited, but there is no specific time.

**Barry Whaley:**

I see.

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

It's based on clinical need, based on therapeutic needs. If veteran A needs X amount of time, that's what veteran A gets. Veteran B may come in with more significant disabilities or impairments and may require more time, so veteran B gets more time to address those issues.

**Barry Whaley:**

Very individualized service.

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

Yes.

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:**

I'll tell you a little bit about Supported Employment, another service that we offer, and this is part of our Compensated Work Therapy program. It is an evidence based practice, which you also may know as Individual Placement and Support Supported Employment or IPS. And that's also found in many of the community mental health centers as well. It was developed primarily to serve individuals with some significant mental health challenges. And in the VA we have veterans with mental health challenges that are served in the program, but also we serve individuals with physical disabilities such as spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury as well. And that is a time unlimited service and it provides an intensive level of support for veterans who need that level. It helps them connect with employers. We provide a job coach side-by-side if needed. We provide ongoing follow along supports to make sure that veterans are able to retain their employment.

And it is a time unlimited service, so veterans can be in this program for as long as they have a clinical need for that level of support, which is great. We have some people in for, it could be years receiving support. Other people move through quicker and end up getting employed, doing well, and we celebrate that success and graduate them from the program, if you will.

We also have another similar program, which is called Community Based Employment Services. This is also a form of Supported Employment. It's not the IPS practice, but it's based on that practice and it was really meant to provide veterans who have a wide range of disabilities and a wide range of support needs, so veterans can get fairly intensive support if they need that all the way up to what we provide in our IPS Supported Employment or they can receive less support if that's needed. But we try and meet the veterans where they're at based on their disabilities, we provide the support that they need in jobs that they want. Both of these programs are highly individualized and we tend to think of them as individual programs. It's not a cookie cutter in any way, shape or form, but really based on individual needs and figuring out exactly what those supports are that people need and we provide those.

**Barry Whaley:**

Joe, are the job development strategies similar or different between the IPS model and the Community Based model?

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:**

They're fairly similar. We're seeking competitive integrated employment in the community, so these are employer paid jobs that are available to anyone in the community. And our staff will go out and develop relationships with employers and then eventually after learning their business needs and matching up the skills and strengths that our veterans have with those community business needs, we try to make a good job match that works both for the employer and for the veteran.

**Keith Hosey:**

These services that you all are mentioning, the IPS Supported Employment and Transitional Work are at all the VA medical centers across the country. You can walk into your nearest VA if you're getting healthcare services there and talk to them about our different CWT services.

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:**

There's one other program that I wanted to mention as well, and that's Supported Self-Employment. And this is not a required service, but it's found at many of our medical centers across the country, it provides support to a veteran who wants to start their own business. And we provide some education about how to run a business. We make connections in the community to resources that can help, for example, capital resources to get your business up and running, the Small Business Administration, local banks. We also provide mentors, other veterans who have started their own business also provide support and help other veterans along the way to learn about running your own business and being successful. That is another service that we provide. We tend to provide mostly the Supported Employment, Community Based Employment services, but this service is also available if veterans want to try and start their own business.



**Barry Whaley:**

Sticking with that, Joe, would the VA assist in doing market study and doing the business plan or is that outsourced?

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:**

There's support from mentors to help a veteran develop their own business plan. We utilize a lot of community resources to help with that. The VA has lots of great expertise in providing support to veterans and employment, but there are many, many communities that have ARP, Small Business Administration. We typically will pull them in and partner with them to help the veteran develop their business plan and move forward.

**Barry Whaley:**

Great, thank you.

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

There are two other programs that we house under the VHA Vocational Rehabilitation umbrella. The next one is Supported Education, this is not a mandated program, but a service that's strongly recommended to help address the needs of veterans who have more of that longer term career goal that requires more formalized training. Supported Education is a clinical program that follows the Choose-Get-Keep model. The Choose part of this is the intake process where the staff do a vocational assessment, identifying the vocational goal, and then really help work with the veteran in identifying all the details around that goal. For example, if a veteran has the idea to be an engineer, for example, they will assist the veteran in looking at, "Well, what do engineers do? What are those tasks that they do? How much do engineers make in this area? What schools are available in this area that provide that specific degree?"

And then the Get portion of this model, is assisting the veteran with enrolling in school, whether that be organizing the application process and assisting with identifying what types of benefits might be available to them, whether their GI Bill is available or other types of financial resources, so assisting them with the get of the school. And then the

Keep process is helping them get organized. They've been accepted into school, now they're starting to go, making sure that they're connected with the disability resource center that's available to help support their needs. If, there are any types of accommodations that might be needed, to make sure that those accommodations are in place to allow the veteran to be most successful in school. And it might be working with them to set up their schedule, to look at their syllabus, to make sure that their calendars are up to date with due dates for each of their classes. And then at the end at graduation, assisting them with finding employment in that respective field

**Barry Whaley:**

That's fantastic. Not only the disability service office, Anne-Marie, but that would probably also include what other veteran services are offered through that post-secondary institution?

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

Correct. And coordinating those services. We can provide the clinical, more intensive service to the veteran while the other service organizations provide more of that financial resource, if you will. The other program is Vocational Assistance, and that looks different at each medical center. Vocational Assistance is traditionally meant to be a short term, very specific service meant to springboard veterans into employment. If veterans require more than just a couple of sessions with staff, then they should be considered for one of our other services that we've talked about.

It could be individual or in a group setting, so individual assistance would be more of that one-on-one, where staff work with a veteran to develop a resume to look at areas where veterans might want to apply for jobs based on what their career goal is, assist with targeting that job search and other applications. Whereas the group type of Vocational Assistance, that's more of that traditional job club, if you will, that those job seeking skills and the supports that you get from that traditional job club, maintaining employment, celebrating successes, and how to apply for federal jobs. These are all types of group type of Vocational Assistance interventions that we provide.

**Barry Whaley:**

I think in summary, what I am hearing is that VR services offered by the VA is so much more comprehensive and diverse than the civilian VR program. Would that be an accurate statement?

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

I would think so. As someone who came from the community into the VA, I was in awe of the vast amount of services that the VA has to offer veterans. It's amazing.

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:**

This is Joe. I think I would just add to that. We have veterans of all different types and abilities and we have a program that can meet their needs so that they can get back to work within the VA. And we absolutely believe that every veteran we support with the right supports can work in a competitive job out in the community. We have those, [inaudible 00:21:48], resources in place to help them get there.

**Barry Whaley:**

Thank you, Joe. Thank you Keith. Thanks Anne-Marie. ADA Live! listening audience, if you have questions about this topic or other ADA Live! topics, you can submit your questions online at [adalive.org](http://adalive.org) or call the Southeast ADA center at 404-541-90 01. We're going to pause now for a word from this episode's sponsor

**Voice-Over:**

The Veterans Readiness and Employment Program, sometimes referred to as VR&E, Chapter 31 or Voc Rehab, helps veterans with service connected disabilities and employment handicaps, prepare for, find and keep suitable jobs. The VR&E program also helps veterans with service connected disabilities who are unable to work by offering services to improve their ability to live independently. You can learn more about the VR&E program at their website, [www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab](http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab).

**Barry Whaley:**

Hi, welcome back. We're talking with Keith Hosey, Anne-Marie Nelson and Joseph Carlomagno about veterans and employment and their readiness for employment. ADA Title I ensures equality in all aspects of employment processes for people with disabilities. That includes hiring, promotion, job assignment, training, termination, any other terms, conditions, or privileges of employment. And that is based on either someone has a disability, a record of having a disability or because that employer has regarded that person as having a disability. And this also includes veterans with disabilities. They have protection under Title I as well. In your work, the three of you, do you see discrimination in terms of hiring or rehiring veterans? And where do you think those biases come from?

**Keith Hosey:**

To answer the question, for me, I feel like the discrimination, the systemic or individual discrimination that I've seen in my work has been very similar for veterans as non-military disabled individuals veterans with disabilities. It's the same accommodations requesting, it's the same gaps in employment due to disability or flare up. It looks very similar. I had a trouble about a year and a half ago, a veteran with a service animal, the problem at the potential employer was not the veteran, it was the service animal. In that respect, I feel like it's very similar to the non-veteran population. I think what we do see with veterans is the misconceptions and myths around military service and around the veterans status more than any type of overt discrimination per se, on their veterans status.

There are a lot of just completely unfounded myths about our veterans out there. I'm sure you've heard plenty of them from, "Do all veterans have PTSD?" "Are veterans more prone to violence?" Those things aren't true. Though they run through our culture and our media and everywhere else. And so, I think that's where we see more anything like that is just, sometimes finding that opportunity to get a good individual into a good job and let the coworkers see for themselves the skills that individual has.

**Barry Whaley:**

Joe or Anne-Marie, anything to add?

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

Well, I was just going to echo what Keith said. From my observation over the years, it's been very similar to what you see in the community as far as working with employers and accommodations, that it's getting those, [inaudible 00:26:21]. And I think over the years I've seen that get better, that employers are more willing and understand accommodations better. But I would say that, that's still an area that continues to need more education and training.

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:**

And I was just going to maybe say a few things about some of the obstacles that veterans face. And these tend to be no different than other individuals with disabilities. 30 years after passing the ADA, we still have physical barriers out there. There are absolutely psychosocial barriers to employment that veterans face such as homelessness. And I think there's a bit of stigma out there too, especially around individuals that have mental health challenges. And so, we try and overcome those and I think a lot of the work we do is developing those relationships with employers and really having conversations about people's abilities rather than their disabilities. And I think that education component when employers start to realize that, "Hey, all of us have some quirks in our lives, but let's pay attention to the things we're good at, our strengths. And I think we can overcome those things.

Some of the things too that we sometimes run into is we have some veterans who have been out of work for extended period of time, and so there's some self-esteem issues. Sometimes those questions of, "Can I work? Will I be successful?" Part of what we do in our programs is address those with veterans and really provide encouragement and hope that they have the skills. These are veterans who have a whole set of skills that they got from being in the military. And so, we really focus on those strengths and really move those forward and talk about those to help veterans see that they have abilities and get back to work. Some of the other types of issues that come up is certainly substance use disorders. About half of the individuals we support have had some type of substance use and so we provide support for that.

And with the help of the Biden Administration, we were just able to hire dedicated Supported Employment staff. Over last year we had about 49 programs that we had new staff dedicated to serve veterans with substance use by providing a Supported Employment staff. This year we'll expand that to all of our medical centers across the country. And so, that's a large influx of staff dedicated to helping veterans with substance use through Supported Employment, get back to work in their local communities. And as Anne-Marie mentioned too, we have some veterans with legal histories. We work really closely with employers to help employers think about the skills, less so on maybe some of those challenges that they've had in the past. A lot of that has to do with, again, substance use where people are in a different place in their life and now they've moved forward with treatment. And so, we help employers understand that and provide individuals with a second chance and get back there working. And so, I think that's some of the things that really can get in the way that we're prepared to address and help our veterans get back to work.

**Barry Whaley:**

I would think, Joe, that many of those veterans who have experienced addiction and have gone through a successful recovery program don't realize that they have protection under ADA Title I as well, because they have a record of having a disability?

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:**

I think we really do that education with employers and talk about how to work through some of these issues. For us, I think it's the main thing we really focus on, because I think it's what moves people forward is, what are the gifts and strengths and skills that you bring to a workplace? And we help our veterans, [inaudible 00:30:12], to be really valued employees of the business. And that's what we want employers to think about when they think about our veterans, that they're valued workers meeting a business need in our community.

**Barry Whaley:**

Yes. Do you often encounter veteran owned businesses that might have preferential affirmative action programs for hiring veterans? Are there many of those?

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

As the National Marketing person for employers, I encounter a lot of different employers across the nation that have an outreach specific for veterans, and understanding veterans come with their gifts and they come, of course, with some limitations as well, if they're coming from our program. And it's really wonderful to see the community reach out and want to hire veterans. It's amazing. I love it.

**Barry Whaley:**

The ADA defines disability as a legal definition, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. But that definition is a little different than what the VA definition of disability is. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit more about how disability is defined in the VA and especially the disability rating system because I'm always fascinated by that.

**Keith Hosey:**

I'm happy to talk a little bit about it. I do, I guess want to throw out the disclaimer that, all three of us work on the healthcare side. None of us are VBA employees, so I'm going to give a very 10,000 foot overview of this. Earlier, I defined a service connected disability. It's any type of condition or disability that is either acquired or exasperated during service. When we're talking about service connection and disability ratings, that I think there's a lot of misconception out there on how it works and what it means. First of all, it goes by tens. No one is ever going to have a 15%, a 35%, a 27, it's always going to be 0, 10, 20, 30 up to a hundred. What a lot of people that are somewhat familiar with the service connection, they'll call it VA math, and the math is definitely not straightforward.

If we all want to go get an engineering degree, we could probably figure it out. Essentially what they do is, they take percentages of the leftover percentage, so if someone is 50% service connected for, let's say back issues, and then now they also have some knee

problems stemming from their service, they will go get evaluated by a disability evaluator and that person might say, "Okay. Well, that's going to be 30%, but 50 and 30 isn't 70, because it's 30% of the leftover, 50%." If you're a fan of philosophy, it sounds a little bit like Zeno's Arrow, but you can get to a hundred and people do get to a hundred. And so, what that means is essentially the cash benefit that you get, so if you are a 10%, it's somewhere around a hundred and something dollars a month on up to a 100%, which is a much, much larger percentage.

Now, there is a lot of confusion about, there's a few caveats in there, so we have something called Permanent and Total P&T, and then we also have something called unemployable, that's what everyone calls it, the actual term is TDIU, Total Disability Individual Unemployability. Let's throw away Permanent and Total right now, because really all that means is the VA isn't going to say you got better. Permanent and Total says, "We're not going to do any reviews," and not we, VBA the benefit side, that's not me, is not going to do any reviews on disability. The TDIU is something that can be affected by employment, the base percentage that anyone's getting, so if someone's 50% service connected with none of this other stuff going on, or maybe they're Permanent and Total, working really, it's not going to affect their benefits.

That's I think one of the misconceptions out there that a lot of our veterans have is that, "If I'm at a 100% and I go to work, I might lose some of my service connection," and that's just not true. What does happen is if you have that TDIU and you work over what the VA considers substantial gainful activity, which is just the poverty level. So, if someone has that TDIU and they work over the poverty level, then there's a possibility that they will lose some percentage in that service connection. Because what happens is, when you have TDIU, you're raised to a 100%. What the VA is saying, maybe your rating is 70% service connected, but those disabilities have such an impact on your activities of daily living, that the VA doesn't believe it's possible you could work at a substantial level on that benefit side. Then that gets raised to a 100% and that is a cash value.

In all of our programs, we make sure that we are very clear about how these things work and we make sure people know what happens so that they can make a decision based



on their life. People will say, "Well, what should I do?" And it's not my life to make that decision, I'm going to give you all the information. And likewise, with social security, we work with the Work Incentive Planning Assistance programs across the country, the WIPAs, and we make sure those veterans that are receiving social security as well have that information so that they can make the most informed decision about their life choices.

**Barry Whaley:**

That's great. Well done, Keith, for not being on the benefit side.

**Keith Hosey:**

Well, I talk to them every once in a while.

**Barry Whaley:**

Well, in wrapping up today, are there other insights, any information you could provide for veterans who have disabilities who are interested in seeking employment, Joe?

**Joseph G. Carlomagno:**

Oh, okay. Well, I think one of the things that we really talk to our veterans a lot about, we talk to the providers that work with our veterans, it's just around the benefits of work. We often think about going to work because of we want to earn a paycheck and the money, and don't get me wrong, very important part, but it's not always about the money, working provides us meaningful activities, a way to be productive and useful, and it provides opportunities for social interactions and connects us with our communities. It increases our sense of belonging, our self-esteem, sense of purpose. All of these things are really important and work is important in our physical and our mental health. When we think about work, we want to think about all of these aspects of it. And I think it's just important that we convey this, not only to our veterans but to their providers as well.

We work together within our Compensated Work Therapy programs with our VA clinicians and talk a lot about these benefits, because we know when we get veterans back to work, they tend to do a lot better in their lives and work is really good for you and it makes you

feel better about yourself and your overall wellbeing. We encourage folks to go back to work and one of the things that we recognize is that fear of losing benefits is important to people and it is a barrier that can sometimes deter people from going back to work. In our Compensated Work Therapy programs are service connected and non-service connected, VA benefits are protected while you're in the CWT program, so you can go back to work without fear of losing those benefits. I think these are important things to really talk about with veterans and know that working is going to give you a better life. We think about our programs as a recovery program and we help veterans with their recovery through meaningful work.

**Barry Whaley:**

Great. Anne-Marie.

**Anne-Marie Nelson:**

I'd like to stress the vast resources that the VA has in coordinating services, coming from outside Voc Rehab coming into the VA as a clinician, I have access to psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, all of the ancillary services that the VA medical centers have to provide, all the different treatment teams. And so, the coordination of Vocational Rehabilitation services with those different departments, whether it be mental health, whether it be physical therapy or spinal cord injury, or any of those other services that the VA offers is just amazing and we're all using the same medical record. And being able to talk and communicate what is being observed over here, it can then be used as assistance over here at the job site and vice versa. The Voc Rehab staff can talk to the psychiatrist saying, "The veteran is experiencing this at the work site," and that communication is direct. It's fast and timely.

The other thing I'd like to really point out is, employment is a protective factor for suicide prevention. And given that we're a clinical service, that coordination with the other different departments is so important to be able to prevent suicide with our veteran population. Veterans are at higher risk for suicide when they are unemployed, when especially if that unemployment came recently, that acuteness. So, being referred to Voc

Rehab timely will really help in that big suicide prevention, as another benefit of work. As Joe pointed out, work is not just about the paycheck, there are so many other factors associated with the benefits of work that, that's important that all clinicians and all staff keep in mind as they hear their veterans talking about unemployment or their struggles with work, to know that this is an available resource. It's not based on service connected disability. It's based on therapeutic need and that resource is available at their fingertips.

**Barry Whaley:**

Keith.

**Keith Hosey:**

I would just like to say that if there are veterans with disabilities who are listening right now and thinking about maybe going to work, I would say, please don't go, alone, reach out. There are services that you earned through your service. And every once in a while we'll get people come through our program and say, "Well, I don't really like a handout." Our services have been earned by these former service members and veterans. Reach out to those resources, not just our program, not just the benefits side. The VA is a firm believer in the peer support movement, so at all of our VAs, we have peer supports who are available, who are working, they're individuals who are working, who are veterans with some type of disability, talk to a peer support, go to the Vet center and talk to some people there. There's just so many different resources out there to help and support you. Please come find us.

**Barry Whaley:**

Keith, Joe, Anne-Marie, thank you so much for being on the show. Listeners, you can access all ADA Live! episodes with archived audio, accessible transcripts and resources at our website, that's [adalive.org](http://adalive.org). You can listen to ADA Live! on the SoundCloud channel at [soundcloud.com/adalive](http://soundcloud.com/adalive). You can download ADA Live! to your mobile device and on your podcast app search for ADA Live!. If you have questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act, you can use our online form anytime at [adalive.org](http://adalive.org) or contact your

regional ADA center at 1-800-949-4232. Remember, those calls are always free and they're confidential.

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**4 Wheel City:** (rapping)

[End of Transcript]

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