**All Employment Network Call**

**3 – 4 p.m. EST**

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Lawanda Hawkins: Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the May national Employment Network conference call. My name is Lawanda Hawkins, the Program Integrity Manager. Thank you for joining us on this beautiful day. Once again we have a full agenda so we'll get started right away with our general announcements and I'll turn it over to Cara.

Cara Caplan: Thanks. Good afternoon. I just wanted to alert people -- I know I am the branch chief for the Employment Network Service Branch and we have been going through every EN determining who has not sent back their 2015a, who has no suitability and in conjunction with the office of acquisition and grants those who have not sent back an APOR and do not have suitability clearance will get notices shortly. They're writing those out as we speak. For those who did not send APORs back you will have ten day to cure and send those back. If that is not done actions could be taken. For suitability you will have 60 days to clear suitability or actions will be taken to terminate your contract. That's it. Thank you.

Lawanda Hawkins: Thank you Cara. We'll move on to Rob who will speak on the SSA marketing summit.

Rob Pfaff: Good afternoon. I want to give you an update on the marketing summit. David weaver indicated in his message several weeks back in regards to the discontinuation of the marketing cd he had indicated that we would be setting up a marketing summit or series of meetings to discuss marketing initiatives that we could take to support EN marketing practices and I’m pleased to announce today the first date for the marketing summit is Wednesday, June 24 and it will occur in Dallas, Texas and what we have been able to obtain is some meeting space from the Dallas regional office to conduct this meeting. The address of the Dallas regional office is 1301 young street and that's in downtown Dallas. And again what will happen is we are currently working on the agenda for this particular meeting and we will provide you with information as far as the logistics associated and what we will have happen during the meeting. Just to give you an overview we're going to try to take advantage of the fact that the Dallas regional SSA folks are gathering to meet and we're hoping to include the local AWIC at the meeting. So we're going to make it a little broader than just having a marketing summit so to speak. We are going to talk about things that you do as ENs to market your services to our beneficiaries. So we would ask that -- and we're looking for some participation from ENs as well in terms of sharing with the group their best practices and their techniques and their materials with a larger audience to talk about ways they've been able to gain foot hold as far as drawing business into them. The other thing that we are going to do is we're going to talk about things that SSA is currently engaged in to market the ticket program. We're going to talk about the website. We would like to get some feedback from participants as far as things that -- you know what their thoughts are about the things we're currently engaged in and maybe identify additional opportunities for SSA to support marketing activities. So that's going to be the crux of the session and also we will expand that a little more to talk about more general ticket program related issues. We plan to include some local representation as well as PABSS representation. We would like them to walk through the services they provide. We would like to have some question and answer in the commission session. So it will be more -- it will start -- it will be focused around marketing but it will also include some more general question and answer session and again our contractors will be there as well both the BASS and MAXIMUS.

 BASS will walk through information concerning virtual job fares we're planning and marketing and also a chance for you to see what kind of things they have available for you to market your own businesses.

 Additionally MAXIMUS will be there to handle any questions or issues that you might have concerning, you know, operational issues, logistics, other areas where maybe some training issues or things of that nature. So we'll provide that. We'll facilitate that as well. So we're excited about this. That's the main piece.
We're encouraging as many of you to express an interest as possible and the way for you to do that and again we will have some information sent out to you shortly but we're going to give you the name of a contact at MAXIMUS who you can coordinate with to answer any questions and express an interest in attending. And I’m going -- at this point let me ask the folks at MAXIMUS can we provide that information now?

Lawanda Hawkins: Okay that person for contact will be Jenni Purdum. Email is jenniferpurdum@maximus.com.

Robert Pfaff: So I would ask those who may be interested or would like to essentially register for this event to email Jennifer and express your interest to her directly. We do have some considerations in terms of space. We think we can facilitate a pretty large meeting but we want to make sure that we have the right kind of space dedicated for this so what you would encourage for those who would like to participate in this initial meeting is to determine whether or not you're going to participate rather soon so we can get an idea what the head count will be and again the contact for that is Jennifer Purdum at MAXIMUS.

 And with that I’m going to kick it back to Cara for one brief announcement.

Cara Caplan: I apologize, I also forgot to tell people those who do not have suitability clearance or did not sent send back their APOR currently you are on a hard hold for payments and ticket assignments as well as getting into the secure provider portal and from the directory. And once you send that stuff in your hold is lifted immediately.

 That's it. Thank you.

Lawanda Hawkins: Thank you Kara. Okay that wraps up general announcements.
We'll move on to ticket portal update and testimonials. We'll have Tina. I’m sorry we need to go back to general announcements in reference to the virtual job fair. We have Donald Jones the on-line social media outreach lead for BASS. Donald.

Donald Jones: Thank you. Thank you for providing the time to talk to you today. I would like to give you updates on where we're standing with the virtual job fares that most of you know have been in development for several months now. Also we would like an opportunity to receive some feedback from you in terms of one requirement that we're being asked to perform from the office of privacy and disclosure. So first we have had -- we did have a dry run of our virtual job fair about two months ago.
Where we had service providers wells beneficiaries within the environment and that dry run went very well. We were able to get action and feedback from those who participated and generally the participants found the platform easy to use and we were able to improve the platform based on the feedback and we look forward to showing you that platform as we're able to do that in the job fares. We have been walking in the offices within Social Security to make sure that we're able to do these virtual job fairs in line with current agency regulation. The first time that the agency has done an activity like this has been some time so we will work through the requirements they have. What we want to talk to you today is we are asking you to take a part in it. Because the information that the beneficiary is uploading into the virtual job fair environment including the resume as well as their profile information is being uploaded into a system which is a vendor that we are contracting through via Social Security, through the bass contractor under agency regulation. That information is considered to be senior data.

 It's not that we're going to be talking that data then using it for any purpose other than enabling beneficiaries to connect with employers but it's basically under the protection of Social Security. Because of that there's a requirement for those beneficiaries who are participating in the job fares to provide our consent, to provide consent for that data, to have understanding of what that data is being used for and to basically give us permission to release their resume and profile data to the employer who are participating in the job fair. Social Security regulations does not allow for an electronic signature. Some sort of other verification other than an actual written signature on a consent form for this activity. So there is a requirement for us to get from the beneficiaries who are interested -- who are going to participate in these job fares, we need to be able to get them to have a paper form that they fill out and sign. We investigated whether we should have them electronically submit those. That requires them to scan it in and upload to a secure server and knowing many might not have access to a scanner or might have technological difficulties with that we would have to still have a facility related to storage and mailing and all those kind of things which would actually remove the efficiencies that would come from an electronic submission.

 We also understand that you as service providers already are storing and maintaining files that are for your beneficiaries whether it be are IWPs or other forms of paper work and you already are following requirements in terms of having the security needed to store PII. So what we would like the feedback from you on is whether it is feasible for those service providers that have beneficiaries that are going to be participating in the virtual job fares which from our earlier communication we are asking you of course to work closely with them within the context of those job fares to make sure a, we have beneficiary candidates who are job ready and b they are supported in the context of the job fair. What we're looking for feedback on is whether it is -- it is a reasonable request for employment networks to be asked to -- once the beneficiary fills out this form that you on their behalf are able to keep that form on file. We're not asking you to necessarily submit it. We're asking you to simply keep it on file in case there's a time when we might need that form. We simply need to be able to validate that form has been kept on file by you. So do you have additional comments you would like to make before we open the line for some potential feedback on that?

 If it's possible we can take a couple comments you might have on that request. We certainly don't want this to be a burden for you but simply because of the requirements of the agency we need to find the most efficient way for us to gain that consent from beneficiaries so they're able to participate in the job fares. I guess whoever has to ask the operator to open up the line for a couple minutes.

Lawanda Hawkins: Okay let's go to the phone lines for a few minutes to address any questions.

Operator: At this time if you would like to ask a question please press star followed by the one on your telephone. That was star followed by the one. Your first question.

Caller: Hi I want to go back from the general announcements about the suitability and APOR. I wanted to find out what was it that -- I think carol had said if you don't have the APOR or clear suitability your agency will get -- what was the notice? I didn't quite get it.

Cara Caplan: It's called a cure notice and it will come from the contracting office and basically it explains what you need to do to cure what you're not doing correctly right now. So if you haven't completed your APOR we put the link back up. You can fill it out now, send it back, MAXIMUS will notify our staff within the day and you will be lifted from all.

Caller: Is that link in the chat room or?

Cara Caplan: Lawanda could you guys put that up on here? I don't know it off the top of my head.

Lawanda Hawkins: Yes we can get the link up in the chat room.

Caller: Okay.

Lawanda Hawkins: Okay. Do we have any more questions for Donald?

Operator: Your next question comes from Steven.

Steven G. Hi this is Steven G in Colorado with SKG Career Services. So what you're asking is the beneficiary sign a consent form, they physically give us that form, we scan it into our computer and keep it.

Donald Jones: That's exactly right so when they're provided the registration they'll have the opportunity to download that form or you will have it on file filled out with all the information they need on it. We have to provide their contact information and sign it and you keep it in whatever secure storage you have and keep it on file. That's all we're asking.

Steven G: Okay. No problem. Thank you.

Operator: And at this time there are no further questions.

Donald Jones: Okay thank you. If you do have any feedback on what we're asking you to do please let -- communicate through your regular channels to make sure that communication is given to us so they can share it with us.
We're looking forward to announcement this. We are making progress but there's a lot of work we're doing in the background to make sure we're able to have that happen. So you will know as soon as we know in terms of when those job fares will be happening. So thank you and I'll return it to the facilitator.

Lawanda Hawkins: Thank you Donald. We're going to continue on with the ticket portal update and testimonials. We have Linda Patino.

Linda Patino: Hi to all. This is Linda Patino, a ticket to success program a national Employment Network in California and one of the things I wanted to share with you is I was invited to participate in the Social Security portal when it first was being discussed and some of the things I’ve had to go through were not so easy. So what we decided today is just kind of share some of the bumps I had to go through, time frames on getting the things to move forward and experiences I have had working with the Social Security portal. So we'll start some of the highlights I wanted to share is first of all setting up the Social Security account with the extra security. Like many I was having difficulty adding the extra security to my account and I had to finally call the toll free Social Security line and spoke with a worker who was able to unblock what was on the account and as of September 12 of 2014, I was able to add that extra security.

 It took two weeks to receive my letter. I received it on the 26th of September and I notified Theresa that I was able to get the extra security on the 29th. And was advised that I was actually added to the iTOPSS system by the third of October.
So it moved kind of fast. And when I look at it now but when it was happening it seemed like it took forever. When I first signed up the other issue I was having is when I continued to sign in I was coming up with the same personal information. It was like okay well this is not Social Security's portal. And I had found out I had the wrong link. So Teresa sent me the link and I was able to get right into the portal. So the whole initial process took four weeks from the beginning to the end of being able to get into the portal. It took four weeks to process but since then I’ve been able to get each one of my staff through the process and it took approximately two weeks for them to get the letter and then almost right away once they got their letter I contacted Theresa and we were -- she was able to get them in to the portal pretty fast. So it took them about two and a half or three weeks at the most to be able to go through the process so that was kind of our issue was getting set up with the Social Security account. The log in process, you know, that convenience I was sharing with them how compared to the portal we were using with OSM which I liked that Portal too you have a number that you would have to -- that is assigned to you and you can go in and change it to whatever your destination is but the convenience of this new log in method using the cell phone or the text security to our cell phones has really been beneficial. And the reason is because I work in various places being able to travel, go to those locations, I don't have time for my staff to set at the computer or at the phone waiting for me to be able to get the call authorized to be able to work from whatever that location is. Now with the new process since it's individualized and it comes to my cell phone it doesn't matter where I’m at or what time basically that I need to sign in I can actually get that code, sign in or log in from whatever location I’m working at. So that's been a huge, huge convenience to us being able to access the portal.
As far as the ticket assignments, unassignments, checking eligibility I appreciate the fact that it's real-time, instant results. You don't have to guess, you know, if it's been completed or not.

 Its like did it go in? Has it been received? So it's been nice because it is real-time.

 The other thing just kind of highlight some of the things I’ve noticed on the portal since the beginning is when you pull up a beneficiary even though we don't have the Social Security numbers visual, visible you can actually see if they're SSI, SSDI, if they're concurrent. It will have that information listed which is nice because, you know, it may take a little bit to get your BPQY being back to be able to identify what their benefit type is. The other thing it will show you if they have prior EN or VR services, if there's been previous payments and when those were made and what type were made. The one benefit I think that we're all -- everyone's going to [inaudible] is the payment process. The time for payments I’ve been able to do is evidentiary and certification.
Every different level, phase one, phase two, outcomes and pay stubs, work number, and the certifications I’ve used it for the QBER that I had information on that I would be able to submit payments. As far as the length of time required to request payments its less paper work involved because you don't have to do all the documents, the forms. You just enter the month and year of the payment that you're requesting, the type of payment requested, the employer's information as far as their name and the type of -- the beginning and ending earnings and the pay date. So the basic information. You print the fax cover sheet with the bar code on it and what I would recommend because you are given at that point a reference number. It's like a case number. I would write that on every one of those attachments with verification that you're going to send with that fax sheet just in case something gets misplaced but that's what we've been doing and it's been going through real good.
Instantly you go to the pending payments that's on the portal and you will be able to see that that's already in there with that case number or that reference number which is good.
It helps you with the tracking process. Just a note phase one pay request if you will go through the phase one process it's going to prompt you to
select either phase one milestone one, two, three, four.
The phase two and outcomes does not prompt you to put that in. You're just going to select either phase two or outcome.
And when processing certifications QBER or the BPQY you would want to select you don't have any earnings to submit -- however you want to put a note, the type of documentation that you are basing that request on. Either you put BPQY or QBER or the other type of verification. We know QBER and BQQY is on file and it's in the Social Security system so you don't have to submit documentation with those requests. The speed of the process the payment turn around, for those of you that don't want to wait 30 days or longer for payments it's been really good because like I say it's instantly in there. My payments have been coming in between ten to 13 days. So by the time that in the portal ten to 13 days I’m paid which is great. If they're denied then I’m able to review the information in the portal and follow up promptly so that it prevents any delays in getting it taken care of. And on average I’ve been signing into the portal I would say several times throughout the day because you want to monitor your payments, you want to check on assignments, unassignments. So I’ve been in it a pretty good bit and I haven't run into too many complications. One thing the team that's working with the it group or whoever's, you know, managing all of the back side of it they're open to conversation with you if you have problems, difficulties. They're asking our feedback which has been really helpful in us resolving and cleaning up some of the glitches. So overall experience has been good with anything new.
There's a period of time to accept the change, to adjust to it and to improve it where needed. I personally am very happy with the process and feel that with time it's going to continue to improve. That's my basic overview of what my experience has been with the portal and I hope that yours goes a little smoother than my initial one which it should.

Lawanda Hawkins: We'll take questions at the end of the call. Thank you so much Linda. That was wonderful. We'll move on to portal updates.
Desiree Fitzgerald.

Desiree Fitzgerald: Thank you Lawanda and thank you too Linda. I’m really glad you were able to share that information with folks. Having Linda Patino share her experience for using the portal it really does drive home the fact that the ticket portal is for you all. It's for the service providers, it's for the convenience of the service providers. We wanted to do our part to make your job facilitating beneficiaries returning to work and gaining financial independence, we wanted to make shah process easier for you by running our programs more efficiently and we hope that this automation is going to do just that. We believe using the Ticket Portal will translate to administrative efficiencies for you all and it will hopefully translate into improved customer service and improved productivity. So we're looking forward to you all joining us in this venture with the new automation. In June we plan to begin implementing use of the new portal. Yes you did hear that correctly. In June.

 It seems like no time ago we had a year before it would be here but this June we plan to begin implementing use of the new portal and we're going to do that in stages based on who's ready. If you use the current portal IVR and the other will cease to exist and eventually the iTOPSS portal will be the one stop shop for services available through those previous platforms. As we head into the homestretch with implementing the portal we ask each of you assess your readiness. It's really time to do that. If you haven't done it please assess your readiness. You probably know what it takes to be ready by now since we've been putting an emphasis on that over the past few months but as a reminder you have to have -- if you plan to be a portal user each individual who plans to use the portal has to have the suitability clearance and you have to create a mySSA account with extra security as Linda mentioned and it was good that she was able to give some time frames associated with some of these things. And there is the security level that requires the access through a code that will come to your cell phone for each entry to the portal. So once you've completed the registration and the mySSA account you would contact someone here at SSA, maybe your EN Service Branch representative or VR agencies, the VR helpdesk, but we have to have notification from you that you've completed those things. Of course we have a record of the suitability but we would need your credentials for your mySSA account so that's why we have to receive contact from you when that is ready. As of last Friday there were 377 individuals enrolled or should I say ready to use the portal and that was representing 170 ENs and 31 VR agencies. We hope that this number continues to rise daily. We're keeping an eye on it weekly. And what more did I want to say to you today?
We realize that some of you are in mid-stream with your preparation. We know that there are some folks that are registered for the accounts right now and we still have folks going through suitability. So we do acknowledge that. But I did want to leave you with a few questions. The numbers that I cited are you in those numbers and what's the status of your
agency's readiness? Do you have at least one person ready? Have you considered how many of your folks should prepare? If you haven't already done so please consider whether you want various people in the portal, you know, who perform different functions. You might want a primary contact, a counselor, it person, financial person. You need to consider how you would want to use the Ticket Portal. So please take serious note of that. We want to make sure that all EN needs will be met and that you'll have the right people cleared and ready to use the portal. Even if you don't use the current tools we would under you to go with us with the new portal and take advantage of some of the benefits that Linda mentioned that is available to you in the new portal. I think that's pretty much what I wanted to say today. Lawanda.

Lawanda Hawkins: Thank you Desiree. And just to reiterate what Desiree has -- the information she's given in reference to getting ready for the portal you can find that information on the ticket to work website. With that we'll move on to today's presentations. I'll turn to over to Charlene who will introduce the speakers for today. Charlene.

Charlene Dwyer: Thank you Lawanda. Hello I am pleased to introduce the presenter on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Labor's collaborative employment service model for veterans with disabilities. Jacqueline Zepp is with the U.S. Department of Veterans affairs and she also has experience speaking on the perspectives on employment networks and audiences. The second presenter Joel Delofsky is a senior program analyst with the U.S. Department of Labor Training Services, the vets program. Joel has extensive experience in the provision of employment services to veterans and in managing the VETS program national employment grant. So we will open the line for audience questions. If we have time at the end of their presentation and with that Jacqueline thank you for joining us I will turn the presentation over to you.

Jacqueline Zepp: Thank you Charlene. Good afternoon. Again I am Jacqueline Zepp and I am the employment coordinator with the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment division in Phoenix, Arizona and today I will go over our program and how we work with DVOP partners to secure employment. Next slide, please.

 So what is VR VOC rehab? We are a benefit program and we help service connected disabled veterans obtain and maintain
suitable employment and or achieve independence in their daily living. Our program is an employment program and we always keep in mind the end goal is suitable employment for our veterans. Next slide, please.
So what do we consider suitable employment? We consider suitable employment to be consistent with the veterans' interests, aptitudes and abilities and the employment the veteran excuser should not aggravate their disabilities and it should be stable and continuing which means it shouldn't be temporary or seasonal work. It needs to be a permanent job. And the job goal requires some reasonably developed job skills and at a minimum some type of short term training such as it certifications, trade and some other quick certifications. So we often get the question of who is eligible for our program and I just briefly want to go over that with you. In order to be eligible for our program the veteran cannot have had a dishonorable discharge and should have at least a 10 percent service connected disability rating and that disability rating has to be from the department of veterans affairs. Next slide, please.
Through eligibility they apply for our program and then they have to be entitled to services.
So once they apply we schedule them for orientation. The veterans will come in. They will meet with a counselor and at this time entitlement is determined. It the veteran must versus a rating and found with a handicap or 10 percent service connected rating and be found to have a serious employment handicap. And the employment handicap are based on the big picture the veteran and this includes looking at assessments, the background, their age, legal issues, skill level, employment stability and so they look at a lot of things when they're determining the entitlement to services. It must also be determined that our services are required to overcome an employment handicap and with the training and the services that we provide there's a reasonable expectation that the veteran will achieve suitable employment and be successfully rehabilitated. Next slide, please. Once entitlement has been determined the client is going to work closely with the VR counselor to determine which employment track is suitable for that veteran and we have a number of different tracks. One the track is selected they go through vocational exploration an individual written plan is developed and the track selection is made and the veteran will begin that training or that certification or whatever it is, whichever track selection is completed. Next slide, please. The nice this is that about 90 to 120 days that veteran -- sorry 90to 120 days within completing their IWRP or training program that veteran is referred to the employment coordinator for employment services and at that time we start to meet with them and we develop an individualized employment assistance plan. In that plan we develop objectives to assist the veteran in successful job placement. We work on the development of a number of things, professional resumes, federal and civilian, we assist with interviewing skills and begin a networking circle and provide them with dress for success workshops, we have referrals to federal agencies and employers. All those things that they need assistance with and also help them be marketable and help them market themselves. Once they've secured employment we can purchase certain items that they might be required to have in order for them to maintain employment. So such as tools.
Next slide, please. Uniforms, short term certifications. And for some of those harder to place veterans we can also offer special employer incentive where we can pay 50 percent of the veterans’ salary for an extended period of time. We also work very closely with our DVOP partners and make direct referrals to them. They assist with the job search, with career fares and employment workshop and with direct referrals, case management and we are very fortunate here in the phoenix office in that we have a DVOP that is located in our department and he helps support our veterans and also we have a job lab on-site where veterans are able to come in and suit lies our job lab look for employment, to prepare the resume and to get support that is needed for them. So that is really great here in phoenix.
As a part of employment services we also assist with the transitional support to employment. We often times develop what we call nonpaid work experiences to help with the transition for a veteran to civilian employment and often times veterans have not worked in the civilian sector or it's been a long time since they worked. This becomes a win/win situation for the agency and veteran. Next slide, please.
The nonpaid work experience benefits for the veteran is it helps with that transition that they need. It supplements other training or experience. It provides them with hands on work experience and it helps build their resume and current work experience. It helps them build that confidence that they need and we provide a subsistence allowance. It's not a big subsistence allowance but it's to help them get gas, lunch, all those things needing to get to a workplace and it also allows them to not work and gain exposure to employment opportunities. Next slide, please. As I said before it's a win/win situation because most of the veterans in the agency -- the benefit to the agency is they gain a quality worker.
There really isn't a lot of red tape: the program is easy to set up and they're minimal paper work. We know the government requires a lot of paper work in the things we do and in this case it's very, very minimal.

 The nonpaid work experience we can customize it to meet the employer needs and the veteran needs and the placement must be at any local, state or federal government facility. The beauty of the program is that at any time during their nonpaid work experience the agency can recruit them through a direct hiring authority or if they fall under any other special hiring authority the agency can directly pick them up. It has been very, very successful here in the phoenix area. Next slide, please. I briefly spoke about the special employer incentive. We can pay in some cases up to 50 percent of the veterans' salary for an extended period of time and we certainly will write these contracts for my where between three and six months. The employment coordinator does that and we work with the civilian employer in setting this up, making sure that there is a good training plan and monitoring the veteran for success. Next slide, please. There are over 80 employment coordinators across the country that are in regional offices and out based offices.
So I encourage you to contact your local VA, VR&E employment coordinator and explore that and build a partnership to help with your clients and our clients to help them succeed and build success. My contact information is listed so please feel free to call or email me with any questions that you might have.
Now I would like to turn it over to Joel.

Joel Delofsky: Thank you Jacqueline. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.
Jacqueline laid out what her does at the local level.
I will discuss how the DVOP special sift complements what her does for individuals in need of rehabilitation prior to being considered ready to enter suitable employment.
Since our time together is limited I'll get right to it.
Can we go to slide number two, please? Thank you. If the term DVOP looks familiar it's because you were already aware of its existence, learned of it because of a unique relationship they maintain with the disability program navigators a few years ago or you remember that my colleague Tim Green of Strategic Outreach provided you a presentation on our programs a few months ago. I’m from the office of national programming and this slide provides reference which applies to shaping the current role of DVOP and staff. I don't know if you can see the entire slide on your screen. If so you'll see that I think we're on slide three now.
I want to be on slide two if we can back up. I think we're going forward. I’m sorry. Slide two. There we go. Thank you. The current slide provides references which apply to shaping what I mentioned. This has changed over time since 1980. Their current duties are on the next slide. This year we have 1552 DVOP specialists and they are assigned in 2466 comprehensive and affiliated American Job Centers and out stationed at locations including VR&E offices throughout the country. Next slide, slide three I have the duties of the DVOP specialist. They basically serve disabled veterans and those in the statute to include transition service members, wounded or ill service members and spouses or caregivers and other individuals to include veterans who have had a high incidence of unemployment after the gulf war, those between the ages of 18 and 24. They provide maximum emphasis on economically and educationally disadvantaged veterans. On the slide before this I think we're getting way ahead of ourselves. Slide number four, please. The significant employment barriers.
It's changing again. Okay. I don't know what's happening but on the slide number four about significant barriers to employment. It shows an eligible veteran or spouse is determined to have a barrier to employment if he or she belongs to anyone of these six categories. Some have time restrictions as you can see.
The unemployed separated veterans have to have been out of work for 27 or more weeks.
We also work with incarcerated veterans and there is a program called the incarcerated veterans transition program that works with individuals still incarcerated to help them transition to civilian employment so that -- special lip since they're at risk for homelessness so they don't have to become homeless when they leave their prisons. DVOP specialist assist apparent may be out stationed as I mentioned not only in the Voc rehab offices but homeless veterans shelters to help the presidents push to end homelessness among veterans and their families.
Note Jacqueline told you about her relationship in Phoenix with the DVOP specialists. That's a proud and long standing relationship and now if we go to the next slide I can mention that there is a VA, VOL, memorandum of understanding agreement. Slide five. There has been one since 1985. The most recent memorandum of understanding was assigned about a month and a half ago. It established a joint work group between DOL and the department of Veterans affairs and they established a collaborative VR&E process for counselors and intake and career identification, training and then job development and placement. And what the moa assures is that all individuals, all participants receive quality employment assistance and they adopt the white house job driven elements. That's on the next slide. So if we can do that.
For those that aren't familiar with the vice president's report issued last July the same day as the president signed into law the work force innovation and opportunities act. It contains these four elements. The second one private and public partnerships for education and training, localized labor market information. Those referrals are based on timely information as to what careers are available for what individuals who have interests in those careers in the local area. And then of course we want to produce jobs and healthy careers and suitable employment. These elements include and it's not on a slide working up front with employers to determine local and regional hiring needs, offer work based learning opportunities with employers including on the job training internships and apprenticeship. Measuring and evaluating employment and earnings outcomes, promoting progression from one educational stepping stone to another and across work based training and education. So individuals' efforts result in progress.
Breaking down barriers to assessing job driven training and hiring for my American willing to work and create collaborations among American job centers, educational institutions, labor and nonprofit agencies. So you see there's a lot of parallels between the hand off that DVOP specialist receive from d VR & e and what the department of labor is doing and what you all in the employment network do for your Social Security recipients, beneficiaries in trying to get them using the ticket to work program back into suitable employment. The current slide shows the process that DVOP specialists follow from receiving chapter 31, title 38 U.S. code individuals from the veterans rehabilitative counselors through an intensive services coordinator who will identify which DVOP specialist in the state should handle that individual. DVOP specialist works with the vocational rehabilitation and employment participant and the local office that referred him or her, expands upon the employ ability development plan, the individual development plan, provides a search in the area in the local labor market for a suitable career, refers to any necessary job or training opportunities that will provide them hands on, on the job training and prepare them better for suitable employment. They record their placements and career results on a form. It's a VR & e tracking sheet which goes to the VA through the service coordinator on a regular basis.

 Can we have the next slide then? This just briefly touches upon.
VR&E tracking report and you can see the kinds of things and information we shared between the department of Veterans affairs and the department of labor's disabled veterans outreach specialists. They show who the individual was referred from and what office. Those who were referred and not given services because of barriers to employment and needed more assistance before being considered job ready, those who enter suitable employment, work of their physical and emotional capabilities and consistent with their abilities and interests.
And those who maintain suitable employment as Jacqueline defined in her presentation for at least 60 days and meet title 38 United States code chapter 31 criteria.
So that ends my presentation. I think we did a good job Jackie in getting this done within the allotted time frame. We're now available for any questions that you may have for us or the other presenters.

Charlene Dwyer: Okay this is Charlene. I want to do a quick time check. Do we have time to take a couple questions?

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen if you would like to register a question please press the star followed by the one on your telephone keypad. If your question has been answered and you would like to withdrawal your registration please press pound. One moment please for the first question. Your first question comes from the line of Steven G.

Steven G: Good afternoon. My question is I don't specialize in veterans. I had an individual that was I was attempting to work with who was on Social Security disability and disability as being a veteran.

 And he ultimately backed off on looking for a job because he could not find out how working affected his disability as a veteran, not Social Security disability but the veteran’s disability was just wondering to know what to advise people.

Jackie Zepp: This is Jackie. You know I can speak to that in that if he's talking about his compensation disability working will not affect his compensation disability at all. However if he was -- again I don't know, you know, all the facts with your client but if he was on individual unemployment ability which we call that it could affect if he goes to work and he works, you know, permanent full-time for so many hours it will affect his iu. But it will not affect his compensation disability.

Steven G: Okay. Thank you.

Joel Delofsky: This is Joel. Good question. Our DVOP specialists have a lot of disabled veterans between 70 and 100 percent disabled which are considered unemployable but still want to work and some volunteer. Others we've been successful at placing others with a 50 percent or 30 percent disability in jobs that pay between 12 and $16an hour to start which would help compensate for any loss there would be to their compensation that they might perceive. But as Jackie indicated it doesn't change their rating if they're working or not working unless they were considered unemployable.

Operator: Next question comes from the line of Al.

Al: Hi Jackie, hi Joel. I’m not sure who to ask this question but I actually used to participate in this program about nine years ago here in the Cincinnati area and I guess it went away for whatever reason and I really enjoyed -- I had great success with the program. I always wanted to get back to working with veterans. I have three questions. I thought that in-house Voc rehab people were handling this. Are you saying that they're allowing outside contracting for this? That's my first question. And I’m not really in my office right now. I’m not able to see the slide show. But I’m curious what the pay out -- some idea on what the payout is now for someone who would contract for this. And how do you get in touch -- what's the best way to get in touch with the local person and what is the title of that local person to get plugged into this?

Joel Delofsky: That would be a question for Jackie. I know that VR & e contracts are out and DVOP specialists do not contract out for placement services.

Al: Oh, okay.

Jacqueline Zepp: Wait. We rarely contract out for placement services. We have right now a contract in place that's a contract and that contract is really working with our independent living and case management. Very, very rarely do we contract out for employment services. So that's the answer to that question. What was your other question?

Al: Um, I guess -- um, how do you -- I guess -- now I’m not exactly sure what use we would be to you. What would an Employer Network -- what problem would we solve for the VA and DVOP? What's solutions to you seek us to help you with?

Joel Delofsky: Sorry, can you repeat that, please?

Al: Joel, um, how do you -- how does an EN fit into the services that we might provide to you?

Joel Delofsky: It would be if you identified an individual you're working with having difficulty placing them. They have a ticket to work and you have a local American Job Center near you.
Those individuals don't have to go through Voc rehab to be referred to the office. They'll do an assessment and determine whether or not the individual needs to be seen by a disabled outreach specialist. If they have a significant barrier to employment or fit one of the criteria for DVOP services.
Chances are they do. Now as mentioned earlier we don't have an individual at every American Job Center but the ones that have the largest concentration of veterans but we have DVOP specialists who will visit offices or smaller offices once a week or once a month and schedule appointments. There's no reason the EN can't coordinate with the DVOP specialist to assist in helping a veteran.

Al: How do we engage them?

Joel Delofsky: If you go to www.servicelocater.org it has a list -- it talks all about the American Job Center offices and by putting in a zip code you find the one closest to you.

Al: Great, thank you.

Joel Delofsky: You're welcome.

Jacqueline Zepp: I think too if you are working and identified a veteran that has service connected disabilities that you make sure that you connect them to Voc rehab and see if there's anything we can do as far as, you know, the training piece and then also the employment piece of that. We have a number of veterans who we work with who are on SSDI and often do use the ticket to work.

Al: Absolutely.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of Paula Vieillet.

Paula Vieillet: Hi. Paula with Employment Options and I have to admit I have had the pleasure of serving some of the vets that have been referred from our local VA office here since we used to contract with them for placement they knew our services. But I was wondering what percentage of disabled vets receive this concurrent benefits with SSI and SSDI and that's my first question.

Jacqueline Zepp: I mean I couldn't tell you off the top of my head exactly how many are under our program and also under SSDI. It would have to be something I would have to look into and get back to you.

Paula Vieillet: I think there's probably a lot of vets that could use our help and I always feel bad that we're having trouble accessing them. And then the other question of course is always and I know it's not a one stop answer with the benefits of what they lose so if they are on dis-- if they've got the disability then they'll keep getting their benefits, their cash benefits but if they don't each individual is really different for how their benefits are affected if they go to work? Because that's always an issue.

Jacqueline Zepp: Again it depends on, you know, it depends on whether they're on. If they are receiving compensation disability it's not going to affect their rating or their disability -- or their pay. But if they are on iu then that's a whole different ball game and yes it will affect if they go to work after, you know, what they do is they monitor them for so many months. I believe it's nine months and then they have to also, you know, report any earnings that they're making and yes they will cut them off the iu. Because the iu is basically saying they're unememployable and can't work.

Paula Vieillet: There are a lot that are receiving their medical benefits for the VA.

Joel Delofsky: Right. Their disability benefits are not going to affect it.

Paula Vieillet: So if they go back to work they'll still be eligible for VA health care?

Joel Delofsky: Usually they're eligible for VR health care based on their disabilities.

Paula Vieillet: I see. And as long as the disability doesn't disappear then they're still disabled?

Joel Delofsky: Correct.

Paula Vieillet: Right or I guess it never disappears once it's assessed or there are times when service related disabilities are determined medically improved?

Jacqueline Zepp: it can. It's very interesting. And I’m not going to be the expert on that to talk to but yes. Some of the ratings can go up or down if they are not permanent in total.

Joel Delofsky: At each regional office they have a public contact team and you can go -- you can walk right in and talk to one of the benefits counselors. You can also call the 1-88-827-1000 number which will put you in touch with a benefits counselor on the phone. But I really -- I really encourage you if you haven't stopped in with the VA with the public contact team you can. But, you know, the benefits really depend on the veteran themselves.

Paula Vieillet: Right. Okay. Well thank you very much. Interesting presentation.
>> the same holds true if I can piggy-back on that for individuals who are disability retired from the military.
Disabled veteran myself I know that we do or did when we first got out of the military get recessed periodically to see if our disability is there and effective. But after a few number of years it's accepted and VA disabled service connected disability stays with you as mine does. I can't speak to SSDI and whether or not working will impact their Social Security benefits. That would be something within house.

Operator: The next question is from Kanisha.

Kanisha: Hi I have a question. One of the gentlemen mentioned about
engaging the DVOP and I wanted to know is there any suggestions on how to engage them because I tried myself to engage one of the DVOP agencies and they we were not very receptive to me.

Joel Delofsky: That is interesting. If that is the case in each state we have a director for Veterans employment and training with the U.S. department of labor. And they would be very receptive to hear about individuals in the DVOP program who are not coordinating well or not responsive to your requests. I don't know what state you're in but if you go to www.dol.gov their homepage you can find a link to the directory just by clicking on a state you can find out the information for the individual you need to speak to in your state.

Kanisha: Okay. Because I don't want to get anybody in trouble but it kind of, you know, when I try contacting them to see if we can work together and coordinate it was like I was getting the run around and I just got frustrated and didn't go any further. And, you know, I ended up, you know, contacting another agency.

Joel Delofsky: There are more than one DVOP specialists per state. You can contact where you're located or the veterans you're helping. A veteran may be in a different part of the state then the office that's closest to you and might be that it would be better for that veteran to go to a different office if you're not getting any satisfaction for the one you tried.

Kanisha: Okay. Thank you.

Charlene Dwyer: Okay. All right. This is Charlene I just really want to thank Jackie thank you and thank you Joel for a great presentation and especially for the helpful responses to the questions. It was great questions. I would like to remain everyone on the line today that on the your ticket to work website there is a serving veterans information section in the resource section of the website and the link, the website that Joel was talking about, links to finding the VR & e folks in your area, the DVOP specialists in your area are on that site. Your ticket to work website and put in veterans and you should be able to get to it and as Jackie and Joel said if you did not have a relationship with certain employment staff or ticket eligible you need to reach out to them and it sounds like sometimes you have to reach out more than once. I would encourage you not to get frustrated but go and introduce yourself and establish those relationships because where the DVOPs will follow along for at least six weeks and probably longer than that the ENs could follow along for possibly several years for ongoing employment support. So just having that rich is so important and knowing about each other.
So thank you Jackie, thank you Joel for informing us. Very helpful today. Lawanda I will turn it back to you.

Lawanda Hawkins: Thank you Charlene. This concludes our call for today. I would like to thank our speakers and presenters. Thank you all for joining us today. Please be sure to join us at our next EN call in June and have a great day.

[Call Ended]