

Veteran Support Specialist (VSS) Training



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Purpose of the VSS Program



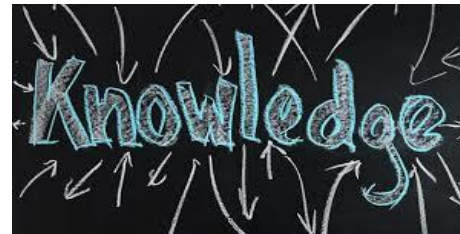
- Offer Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) guidance and training to sustain the most effective ways to serve those Veterans that have served our country.
- Training is specifically developed for Veterans.
- Empower NC VSOs to help Veterans navigate a complex system of care.
- Increase the capability and versatility of VSOs to engage with Veterans to address a broad range of issues and needs (skills training).



Purpose of the VSS Program (cont'd)



- Develop working knowledge on mental health conditions and various forms of trauma.
- Build stronger relationships between the local, state, federal, and non-profit Veteran community.
- Adapt the program to address the needs of VSOs in the field.



What is a Veterans Service Officer (VSO)?



VSO Theory

- Counsels and assists Veterans and their dependents in filing claims for benefits with the USDVA and other federal, state, and local government agencies.

VSO Reality



What VSS Training Involves



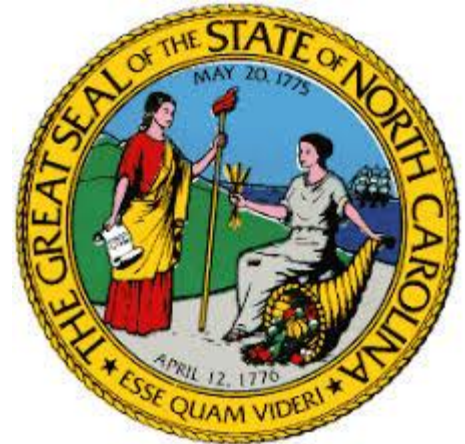
- Veteran services community building
- Partnership/relationship building
- Interactive training
 - In person (2 days)
 - Online/Web-based (always available)
 - Phone conferences (~ twice)
- Engagement (soft) skills training
- Introduction to various mental health conditions and traumas effecting Veterans
- Training that is need based evolving!



VSS Training Partnerships/Relationships & Brief History



- Duke Evidence Based Implementation Center (Duke EPIC)
- Durham VAMC
- NC Dept. of Military & Veteran Affairs
- Center for Child and Family Health
- UNC School of Social Work
- NC Dept. of Health & Human Services
- The first VSS class started on June 30, 2015. VSS training continually adapts to the needs of VSOs out in the field with each class. Currently, VSS training is scheduled for twice a year, through 2019.



VSS Interactive Training



- In person training for two separate days adapted to fit within busy VSO schedules. Includes lectures from highly qualified professionals, PowerPoint presentations, group exercises, simulated client interviews, and networking with various professionals within the Veterans services community.
- Online/Web based training, which is always available for review. Includes PowerPoint slides, videos, and conferencing features.
- Phone conferencing on two separate occasions. Here phone conferencing is used along with online training to monitor progress with the online training and to help adapt the training for current needs.



VSS Training Topics Covered



Engagement Skills

1. Peer/coach/mentor role & Case Management (including warm handoffs)
2. Military Culture
3. Connecting to Resources
4. Reflective & Active Listening
5. Motivational Interviewing
6. Building Relationships/Person First Language
7. Self care/STS Mitigation
8. Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction
9. De-escalation/Planning for Anger
10. Decision-making, Problem Solving, & Conflict Styles

Understanding Mental Health Conditions

1. Understanding Trauma & PTSD
2. Traumatic Brain Injury
3. Military Sexual Trauma
4. Co-occurring Disorders
5. Homelessness/employment
6. Suicide
7. Substance Abuse & Recovery
8. Whole Health Management/ Mind-Body Connection
9. Self Help & Advocacy
10. Evidence-based Treatment of Mental Health Issues (e.g., CPT, PE, DBT, etc.) *coaching into care

Importance of VSS Training to VSOs



- The issues Veterans need to address are regularly changing, often with a corresponding increase in mental health-related issues.
- The VSS training provides an understanding of mental health conditions affecting Veterans, as well as engagement skills for the VSO in providing help for these Veterans.
- The engagement skills taught are valuable tools and cross over well with helping a VSO with all services provided to Veterans.
- VSS training sets a standard for interviewing skills, counseling skills, advocacy, and understanding of mental health issues that can be used by new and seasoned VSOs alike.



Application of VSS Training in the Field by a VSO



- Tell briefly any one of the number of stories of how applying VSS training ended with a Veteran receiving benefits they were not aware of and happy with the results →
- Stories of note:
 - Knees
 - WW II pension
 - Doing what hadn't been done before
 - Interviewing a fugitive



Questions?



- Any questions, comments, concerns?
- Contact information
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THANK YOU