

Partnering To Bridge the Gap

By Luis Torres

“Be the Bridge” is something that our Veterans department has taken to heart! In order to find the “right job for the right person every time” requires a myriad of support networks within ESD, partner organizations and the community. The WorkSource that our parents once knew as the “unemployment office” is no more. We are vastly different and are still evolving to provide current, meaningful and practical support to job seekers. What does that mean? Well it means that we employ many tools and practices to help individuals with employment problems, especially job seekers with significant barriers to employment such as homelessness, mental or health problems, substance abuse and justice involvements to name a few. We all do the best that we can with the resources that we have, which depending on the office or location can be restrictive to say the least. That is why we at WorkSource Central Basin like many other offices are partnering to bridge gaps in services that will ensure our seekers get additional support that will make them job ready.



Veterans Support Case managers visiting the VA Medical center are picture outside the HR office
(Left to Right) Robert Dixon (Walla Walla DVOP) Eileen Boylston (Central basin LVER) Claudia Betancourt (Wenatchee HopeSource) Jennifer Shields (Wenatchee HopeSource) Jennifer Semanko (Central Basin HopeSource) Luis Torres (Central Basin DVOP) (8/18/2016)

This story focuses on meeting the needs of Veterans that require additional support, such as mental health, substance abuse counseling, long term medical care treatment or chronic homelessness. Due to our geographical location we often have to refer customers to neighboring counties where the services are available. A benefit of being a Disabled Veteran’s Outreach Program (DVOP) case manager, is that we have access to a network of DVOP’s throughout the state that have partnered with their local organizations that often provide what we may lack locally.

In this case WorkSource Walla Walla's DVOP Robert Dixon was our resident expert and served as our gateway to the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center. HopeSource Case managers from Wenatchee and Moses Lake have built strong working relationships with counterpart WorkSource Veterans teams in which Veteran referrals is quite common. This is why through some collaboration and planning, we all took a day trip to visit Robert and the VA Medical center to learn the intake processes, what is available, how it looks, the atmosphere and how it functions. We as case managers know that trust is huge in case management, so knowing what you are referring clients to is very important, so if at all possible an in person visit should be done, so we did.



Robert Dixon and Luis Torres are both DVOP's (8/18/2016)

This facility provides counseling for Veterans with substance abuse issues and mental health needs. The Medical center also has onsite medical care teams and living quarters that include anything from single to multi-family units. We were lucky enough that Robert coordinated and had Tim Meliah the Director of Catholic Charities of Walla Walla walk us through the quarters where he showed us just how nice these apartments are. Recently remodeled, boasting hardwood floors, all appliances included, some furniture, very beautiful apartments that would fetch a hefty rental price on the open market, but here the cost is minimal and is dependent on the Veteran. Veterans have access to medical teams and counselors that help them receive the supportive services they need and can stay as long as they want.



Veterans case managers touring the remodeled apartments (8/18/2016)

Also on the premises is a VA call center which XXXXX the center Manager showed us, it's here that calls to satellite offices such as Wenatchee VA CBOC come. Robert has also worked and established a strong working relationship with the VA Medical Center and provides direct job readiness support to Veterans living at the center. He has had success finding and placing Veterans at the center itself working in the call center or other open positions. These local partnerships fostered through outreach give all of us the tools and knowledge to be able to truly "be the bridge" for job seekers throughout our state. Thanks Robert for setting this up!