



## Agenda

### WEDNESDAY, August 7

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7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Exhibitor Check-in & Set-Up | Independence Foyer

*Breakfast on your own*

7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Hospitality Desk: Registration Check-in | Independence Foyer

*Pick up your name badge for the U.S. Department of Labor Veteran Employment & Training Service Sessions & the Veterans Conference*

8:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. U.S. Department of Labor VETS Sessions

**NOTE:** *These sessions are for state workforce agency staff only. This includes DVOPs, LVERs, Consolidated Staff and JVSG Coordinators. Registration & Name Badge are required to attend. SPACE is LIMITED*

8:30 a.m.- 9:45 a.m.

**Listening Session with U.S. Department of Labor VETS & NVTI**

- **Margarita Devlin**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations & Management, Veterans Employment & Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor
- **Hannah R. Toney**, Ed.D, Director, Custom Learning Solutions, Management Concepts
- **Maria Temiquel**, Director, Grants & Training, Veterans Employment & Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor

10:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

**Listening Session with U.S. Department of Labor VETS & NVTI**

- **Margarita Devlin**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations & Management, Veterans Employment & Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor
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- **Maria Temiquel**, Director, Grants & Training, Veterans Employment & Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor

11:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Exhibit Showcase

| Independence Foyer

*Lunch on your own*

12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Opening Ceremonies

| Independence Ballroom

**Welcome to the 11th Annual NASWA Veterans Conference**

**Lori Adams**, Senior Policy Director, National Association of State Workforce Agencies

**Sarah Morrissey**, Employment Services Bureau Director, New Hampshire Employment Security, and Chair, NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee

**Presentation of the Colors**

**Joint Forces Color Guard of the Military District of Washington\*** (invited)

**Singing of the National Anthem**

**Dennis Wimer\***, Executive Director, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Sam Mitchell\***, WorkSource Administrator, Washington State Employment Security Department and Technical Vice Chair, NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee

### Welcome to Washington D.C.

**The Honorable Muriel Bowser**, Mayor of Washington DC (invited)

### Introduction of the NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee Members & Recognition of all Veterans in Attendance

**Sarah Morrissey**, New Hampshire Employment Security

1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Opening Plenary

| Independence Ballroom

#### Conference Welcome

**The Honorable James Rodriguez\***, Assistant Secretary, Veterans Employment & Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor

#### NASWA Update

Hear from NASWA President and CEO **Scott B. Sanders** as he provides a brief update of what has been happening at NASWA over the past year, with a focus on new initiatives, projects, and programs to benefit your state or territory and its residents.

Speaker:

**Scott B. Sanders**, President & CEO, National Association of State Workforce Agencies

#### Partnership Update

**Dennis Wimer\***, President, National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, and Director, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs

#### A Word from our Platinum Sponsors

**Sierra Health + Wellness**

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Plenary Session

| Independence Ballroom

#### Keynote Address

A Fireside Chat. Embracing the Challenge: Where the Beauty Lies?

**Merryl Tengesdal** is an American retired career military officer who is the first and only Black woman to fly the [United States Air Force's U-2](#) spy plane used for specialized high-altitude [reconnaissance missions](#). She is one of five women and only the fourth Black person (in 2004) to be in the U-2 program. She shares the plane's nickname, The Dragon Lady.

Moderator:

**Tiffany Daugherty\***, Head of Military & Veterans Affairs and Specialty Strategies, Johnson & Johnson

Speaker:  
**Colonel Merryl Tengesdal\*** (USAF Retired)

### *A Word from our Gold Sponsors*

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. **Networking Break** | Independence Foyer

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. **Plenary Session** | Independence Foyer

### *Student Veterans*

Speaker:  
**Jared Lyon\***, National President & CEO, Student Veterans of America

### **Mark Sanders Award Presentation**

*The 2024 Mark Sanders Award for Exceptional Service to Veterans, with special emphasis on Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment, recognizes the efforts of an entire one-stop career center or initiative whose efforts to serve Veterans go above and beyond the scope of mandatory service provision. This award is named in honor of Mark Sanders, who, during his distinguished career with the California Employment Development Department and in leadership positions with the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, was untiring in his efforts to promote excellence in services to Disabled Veterans. The workforce center in Sacramento, California, is named in his honor.*

Presented by:

**Scott B. Sanders**, President and CEO, National Association of State Workforce Agencies, and  
**Sam Mitchell\***, WorkSource Administrator, Employment Connections Military Base Support, Washington State Employment Security Department and Chair, NASWA Mark Sanders Committee

**Conference Adjourns for the Day!**

## **THURSDAY, August 8**

7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. **Exhibit Showcase** | Independence Foyer

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. **Hospitality Desk** | Independence Foyer

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. **Hosted Breakfast** | Independence Ballroom

8:30 a.m. – 9:40 a.m. **Plenary Session: Welcome to Day Two** | Independence Ballroom

### ***I Just Wanted to Serve***

Clint Romesha is a retired United States Army soldier who received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Battle of Kamdesh in 2009 during the War in Afghanistan while serving with Bravo Troop, 3d Squadron, 61<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. After leaving service in 2011, he moved to North Dakota to work in the oil and gas industry. When presented with the MoH in 2013, he was the fourth living recipient for the Global War on Terrorism. [Medal of Honor citation](#) | [Video](#)

Speaker:

**Staff Sergeant Clinton Romesha\*** (USA, retired)

### ***Veteran Business Owners: Pathway to Success***

Learn about the amazing journey of the featured Veteran entrepreneurs and the resources they used to start and grow their businesses. Hear how they started their journey and the challenges and successes along the way.

Moderator:

**Stan Kurtz\***, Director, Policy & Engagement, US Small Business Administration

Panelists:

**Don Miller\***, Director, Veterans Business Outreach Center, Norfolk VA; **Hyacinth Tucker\***, Owner, The Laundry Basket LLC; **Donnell Johns\***, Owner & Founder, Veterans Grown America; **Cynthia S. Kan\***, Executive Director, Operation Code

9:40 a.m. – 9:55 a.m. **Networking Break**

9:55 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. **Concurrent Breakout Sessions**

9:55 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.

### **Breakout 1: ROOM**

*Promising Practices – North Carolina: Promising Practices for Serving the Native American Veteran Population*

This presentation will examine the roles and responsibilities of North Carolina JVSG staff as they provide employment services to enrolled members of the specific tribe or enrolled members they serve. An enrolled member of the State recognized Lumbee Tribe located in Southeastern North Carolina in Robeson, Hoke, Cumberland, and Scotland Counties and an enrolled member of the Federally recognized Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians located in the Great Smokey Mountains of Western North Carolina in Haywood,

Jackson, Swain, Cherokee, Graham, Clay and Macon Counties will be your guides through this process as they provide their unique perspective and experiences of working as Native American Veterans with Native American Veterans in their ancestral homelands. They will also explain the importance, flexibility, and cultural sensitivity that JVSG staff need to have and use when building these relationships and how only through a process of open and heartfelt listening do, they have an opportunity to be a part of something very special.

Presenters:

**Gerald Ball\***, Consolidated DVOP/LVER, North Carolina Department of Commerce

**Gary Jacobs\***, Consolidated DVOP/LVER, North Carolina Department of Commerce

**Promising Practices – Iowa: Why and How to Advocate for Veteran Resource Rooms**

This presentation will showcase the benefits of Veteran Resource Rooms, which are areas within and office or a service building that are reserved for veteran specific needs and wellness. They are oriented in layout, equipment, and staff with veterans in mind. In Iowa, these centers provide safe spaces for Veteran meetings and appointments, not only with the state JVSG staff, but also with Veteran service officers, and other center personnel. Veterans can use this space to conduct job searches, on-line interviews, work on their resume, and more. This approach significantly reduces duplication and repetition of services, and the spaces have become a hub for community partner meetings.

Presenters:

**Dakota Andrew\***, Veteran Career Planner, Iowa Workforce Development

**Sue Trobaugh\***, Veteran Career Planner, Iowa Workforce Development

## **Breakout 2: ROOM**

**What Makes a Great Story?** Discover the power of personal stories and explore how to infuse it into your own work in this interactive StoryCorps workshop.

Military Voices Initiative (MVI) at StoryCorps was launched in 2012 with the goal to record, preserve, and share the stories of veterans, service members, and their families to honor their service and sacrifice, amplify their stories, and let them know that we as a nation are listening. MVI interviews with veterans, active duty service members, or military families with their loved ones to discuss what matters most to them, and to archive these conversations for future generations to hear. Many of these conversations shed light on wide-ranging issues affecting veterans, including reintegration, education, mental health, and employment. In this workshop, we will share highlights from our Military Voices collection and dig into the how of StoryCorps, including best practices for listening and tips from our facilitators and producers to elicit great stories. Attendees will have the opportunity to know colleagues more deeply through discussion and practice listening and interview techniques that are applicable to their everyday lives and their work. Leave with the tools to contribute your own story to the growing archive.

Presenter:

**Charlie Palumbo\***, Manager, Military Voices Initiatives, StoryCorps

### **Breakout 3: ROOM**

Life beyond addiction for our veterans: How to talk to a veteran in crisis and early intervention to provide access to treatment.

*Veterans are the backbone of our nation, having sacrificed their lives, time, and often their mental well-being to protect our freedoms. Their experiences shape them in unique ways, and it's crucial we support them through their challenges as they transition back to civilian life. By collaborating with resources across the United States, such as Sierra Health and Wellness's Wellness for Warriors Program, Veterans Affairs hospitals, community mental health centers, and nonprofit organizations, we can ensure veterans have access to the tailored treatment and support they deserve, facilitating their journey toward recovery and resilience.*

Presenters:

**David Burke**, Co-Founder & Chief Marketing Officer, Sierra Health + Wellness

**Prairie Francis**, Community Care Liaison, Sierra Health + Wellness

### **11:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. Breakout sessions**

#### **Breakout 1: ROOM**

*Promising Practices – Texas: Helping Veterans Starts Here*

*Since 1927, the mission of the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), a state agency, has been to advocate for and provide superior service to veterans that will significantly improve the quality of life for all Texas veterans, their families, and survivors. The TVC does this by providing eight unique services throughout the state. Including the Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA) grant program. The TVC awards reimbursement grants to nonprofit organizations, veteran service organizations, and units of local government that provide direct services to veterans, dependents, and surviving spouses. The FVA grant programs and services provided by grant funding are defined periodically by a statewide veteran needs assessment study. The Texas Lottery is the single most significant source of funding for the FVA generating millions with \$2 Veterans scratch off tickets. Other funding sources include individual donations, Driver's License and ID Card registration/renewal forms, License to Carry, and hunting and fishing licenses. The Fund for Veterans' Assistance has awarded over \$168 million to organizations across Texas to help over 300,000 veterans and their families since 2009.*

Presenter:

**Elaine Zavala**, Director, Fund for Veterans' Assistance Grant Program, Texas Veterans Commission

*Promising Practices – Virginia: Expanding the Transition Window (Soldier Recovery Unit/Wounded Warrior Regiment and TAP)*

*Virginia formed a strong partnership with the Soldier Recovery Unit (SRU) at Ft Belvoir. The recovering soldiers began telling their friends and others transitioning service members about the care and service they were receiving regarding employment. That spilled over to the Wounded Warrior Regiment (Quantico) and other*

Transition Offices. Additionally, the idea to create a Veteran Employment Specialist sprung to life because not all Active Duty personnel would transition to become Veterans served by a DVOP, but they would still needed help with employment and finding the AJC. Currently we provide weekly outreach to SRU/WWR units located statewide while also receiving referrals from them.

Presenter:

**Edward DuPass\***, Northern Regional Veterans Manager, Virginia Works (Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Employment)

## **BREAKOUT 2: ROOM**

VPL 05-24: A Discussion of JVSG Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Excellent delivery of services to veterans through the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) starts with a shared understanding of who can be served and how JVSG staff collaborate with other Department of Labor-funded grant program staff in the 2,300 American Job Centers located throughout the country. Explore the roles and responsibilities of Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives with staff from the Department's own Veterans Employment and Training Service.

Presenters:

**Sarah Bierman\***, Deputy Director for Grants & Training, Office of National Programs, US Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service

**Rebekah Haydin\***, National Jobs for Veterans State Grant Lead, Office of National Programs, US Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service

12:05 p.m. – 1:05 p.m. **Hosted Lunch** | Independence Ballroom

1:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. **Concurrent Workshop Sessions**

1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. **Breakout sessions**

## **Breakout 1: ROOM**

HEAL\*ARIOUS: Using Humor for Improved Physical and Psychological Performance

Presenter:

**Robin Johnson\***, LTC USA (Retired) & CEO Best Medicine Brigade

2:30 p.m. -3:30 p.m. **Breakout sessions**



## **Breakout 1: ROOM**

*Promising Practices – Washington: Operation Military Culture: Serving Those Who Served through Empathy & Understand*

*Operation Military Culture (OMC) is an innovative approach to immersing customer-facing team members within the military culture. This presentation will explain the What, Why, How, and What's Next behind Central Sound Region's Operation Military Culture initiative. It will include information and perspectives from those involved in implementation and those who have participated in OMC. Please join us in learning about how leveraging our existing talent and resources strengthens our ability to serve the military community.*

*Presenter:*

**Jo Ann Enwall**, Team Lead, Washington Employment Security Department, WorkSource Joint Base Lewis McChord

*Promising Practices – Oregon: Incorporating Peer Support Methodology in DVOP Practice*

*Using a "Peer-centered" approach to DVOP practices leads to increased client engagement and more cases closed with positive outcomes. Workshop participants will learn what Peer Support is and isn't, how it applies to DVOP role, and learn about successful outcomes using Peer Support methodology. All too often, IEP/IDP's are written from the DVOP's perspective and fail to consider the client's "lived experience". This means that the assumption becomes "the client should do what I would do." As peers, we can certainly sympathize, and sometimes empathize, with the client, and better understand the significant barriers they are facing. Using Peer Support methodology helps DVOPs create an IEP/IDP that is familiar to the client and creates "buy-in" to achieve success. When clients experience success, they can reflect on the work they've done and totally "own" their accomplishment.*

*Presenter:*

**Tom Summers\***, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist, WorkSource Oregon

## **BREAKOUT 2: ROOM**

*The National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI): Unlocking your Veteran Service Provider Superpowers*

*Presenters:*

**Hannah R. Toney**, Ed.D, Director, Custom Learning Solutions, Management Concepts

**Brandon Webb\***, National Veterans Training Institute Lead, US Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service

**3:30 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.**

**Networking Break**

**4:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.**

**Breakout sessions**

## **BREAKOUT 1: ROOM**

*Going Above and Beyond*

This session will highlight recipients of NASWA's prestigious Mark Sanders Award, given each year to a state that exemplifies "going above and beyond" to serve the needs of Veterans with significant barriers to employment. Come to this session to learn more about their projects, what they have learned, and how you can incorporate their ideas into your state.

Presenters:

**TBA**

**BREAKOUT 2: ROOM**

*Unleashing the Power of the National Labor Exchange*

Presenter:

**Amber Gaither\***, NLx Director, National Association of State Workforce Agencies

**Shannon Offord**, Vice-President of Partnerships, Direct Employers Association (invited)

**Lori Adams**, Senior Policy Director, National Association of State Workforce Agencies

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

**Hosted Networking Reception**

| Independence Foyer

**FRIDAY, August 9**

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7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

**Hosted Breakfast**

| Independence Ballroom

7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Exhibit Showcase**

| Independence Foyer

7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Hospitality Desk**

| Independence Foyer

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

**Plenary Session: Welcome to Day Three**

| Independence Ballroom

**When 'Military Friendly' Just Isn't Good Enough**

Speaker:

**Kevin Schmiegel\***, Co-Founder & CEO, ZeroMils

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

**Networking Break**

| Independence Foyer

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Closing Plenary Session**

| Independence Ballroom

### **Thank You, Next! The Private Sector's Role in Veteran Employment in an Age of Negative Unemployment**

Veteran unemployment is at historically low levels, causing many Fortune 500 companies to rethink – and reshape – their veteran hiring programs. This is the correct instinct, as veteran nonprofits, workforce agencies and veterans themselves have become more sophisticated about the transition from military to civilian life. At the same time, many companies have impressively organized and resourced infrastructures dedicated to helping veterans transition and thrive. How can we collectively leverage those systems to identify and solve new and ongoing challenges for transitioning veterans in the workplace?

Moderator:

**Laura Schmiegel\***, Senior Vice President, Strategic Partnerships, Orion Talent

Panelists:

**Ed Carr\***, Senior Director, Comcast NBCUniversal

**Chris Liakos**, Associate Director, Fair Employment Practices Compliance, EY

**Marcus Ohlenforst\***, Military & Diversity Workforce Strategist, USAA

### **From Combat to Comedy: Harnessing Strength and Humor in the Face of Adversity**

Speaker:

**Lieutenant Colonel Robin 'Phoenix' Johnson\*** (USA Ret), Therapeutic Humor Facilitator, Comedian, Veteran and Military Spouse

### **Final thoughts and closing**

Speaker:

**Sarah Morrissey**, Employment Services Bureau Director, New Hampshire Employment Security, and Chair, NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee

### **Conference adjourns – safe travels everyone!**

**See you next year!** Mark your calendars for **July 9-11, 2025**, at The Grand Hyatt in Washington DC.

\*Indicates individual is a Veteran, NG/Reservist, currently serving, or a military spouse. Please thank them for their service and ask how you can serve them!