

The Homeless Programs Office newsletter contains news and information about Veteran homelessness. Share this newsletter with others so they too can stay up-to-date.



VHA Homeless Programs



[Executive Director's Message](#) | [Veterans' Stories](#) | [Resources](#)
[COVID-19 Response](#) | [Staff Spotlight](#) | [Fact of the Month](#)

Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance. To minimize the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19, only Veterans who do not have access to a phone are to visit their closest VA medical center without calling in advance.



Message from Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office

This Black History Month, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) (HPO) has the esteemed legacy of Black Veterans' military service in mind. In 2019, the American Community Survey reported there were around 2.15 million Black or African American Veterans in the U.S., representing about 12% of the total Veteran population. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Health Equity projects that this percentage will increase to 15% by 2045.

In addition to their military service, many Black Veterans also serve our country in ways that help all Veterans. Among these exceptional individuals is Jesse Brown, a disabled Marine Corps Veteran who made history when he served as the first African American Secretary of Veterans Affairs from 1993-1997. This month, we have a special feature about former Secretary Brown's profound impact on the expansion of VA's homeless programs and services and his legacy of advocacy for all the men and women who served in the military.

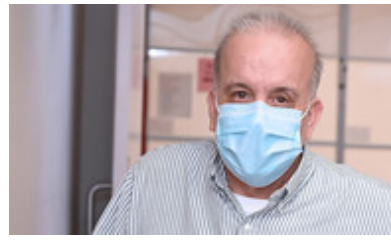
We also have an exclusive Q&A article featuring HPO's National Racial Equity and Racial Justice Workgroup that sheds light on the important groundwork this group is laying to ensure equitable service delivery to every Veteran we serve. Unfortunately, Black Veterans are overrepresented among the homeless Veteran population, constituting 33% of Veterans experiencing homelessness in the U.S. These individuals, like all Veterans who lack stable housing, have specific needs that HPO and our partners are committed to addressing.

Every day, HPO conducts coordinated outreach to find those Veterans most in need of assistance; connects Veterans who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness to health care, housing solutions, community employment services, and other supportive resources; and collaborates with housing providers, nonprofits, and federal, state, and local agencies. In this issue's Veteran Success Story, we profile a Navy Veteran's second chance at independence due to his participation in HPO's Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. Our office hopes you will seek out more stories, learn more history, and honor the Black Americans who have served honorably in the armed forces. It is critical for all of us to keep this part of the American story in mind as we look to the future with optimism about how we can best serve the nation's Veterans and ensure they all have a safe, stable place to call home.

Veteran Success Stories

Illinois Veteran gets a second chance through HUD-VASH program

In November 2018, [Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital](#) opened [Freedoms Path Hines II](#), an apartment building on its campus in Hines, Illinois, offering 52 one-, two-, and three-bedroom units to eligible local Veterans through the HUD-VASH program. For Navy Veteran John Fischer, HUD-VASH was the second chance he'd be looking for.



[Read more.](#)



Special Edition: Remembering Secretary Jesse Brown—Veteran and visionary

This February, while the nation celebrates Black History Month, HPO recognizes that our history of accomplishments preventing and ending homelessness among Veterans is built on the work of trailblazing Black men and women serving this country during war and in peace time. Among these notable individuals is Jesse Brown, a decorated disabled Vietnam Veteran who in 1993 became the first African American Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Secretary Brown, who wanted to be known as the Secretary for Veterans Affairs, was an advocate, visionary, and leader whose commitment to Veterans led to an expansion of VA benefits and programs.

[Read more.](#)

VHA Homeless Programs - Conversations about Racial Equity Podcast

The [National Center on Homelessness among Veterans \(NCHAV\)](#) in collaboration with VA's Employee Education System developed [a two-part podcast](#) on Racial Equity and Racial Justice. This series is moderated by [Roger Casey](#), PhD, LCSW, Director, Education & Dissemination, NCHAV.



[Listen.](#)



Winterhaven "Lite"

The Winterhaven Homeless Veterans Stand Down has always been a much-anticipated event for the many Veterans who participate. After the arrival of COVID-19 in 2020, all major outreach events were put on hold per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) and VA guidance.

The medical center's Health Care for Homeless Veterans team refused to let the Winterhaven tradition completely lapse. They collaborated and devised a safe way to help homeless and at-risk Veterans.

[Read more.](#)

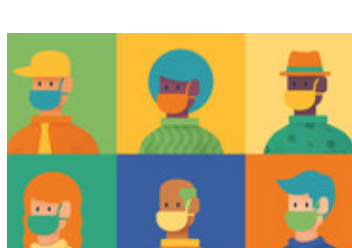
HPO Resource Quick Links

- [Food insecurity](#) tends to be higher among households relying on social assistance, single-parent homes, ethnic minorities, and people who are [homeless](#) or house insecure.
- [COVID-19 Vaccination Conversation Tips for Homeless Service Providers](#) is a one-pager developed by HUD to help service providers talk to persons experiencing homelessness and staff about getting the COVID-19 vaccine.
- [Funding Opportunity: Tribal HUD-VASH Expansion](#) Notice of Funding Availability invites eligible applicants to submit applications for the program.
- [How You Can Help](#): VA is preventing and ending Veteran homelessness in communities throughout the nation by collaborating with various organizations to provide affordable housing, employment opportunities, household essentials, and more. [Partner collaborations can make a difference.](#)

HPO COVID-19 Response and Updates

As the COVID-19 vaccine is becoming accessible to those experiencing homelessness, CDC COVID-19 Response Vaccine Task Force and CDC COVID-19 Response Homelessness Unit developed a presentation on [COVID-19 Vaccination for People Experiencing Homelessness](#) that covers:

1. COVID-19 vaccine basics
2. COVID-19 vaccine safety
3. Prioritization of people experiencing homelessness for COVID-19 vaccination
4. Special considerations for vaccination among people experiencing homelessness



HPO Staff Spotlight: National Racial Equity and Racial Justice Workgroup

Since 2015, advocates for people experiencing homelessness across the country have recognized the need to look at homeless services from a racial equity lens due to the disproportionate rates of homelessness experienced by some racial and ethnic groups. To learn more about what the HPO Racial Equity and Racial Justice Workgroup is doing, we interviewed several Workgroup members.

[Read the full interview.](#)

HPO Fact of the Month

Did you know?

According to the [Department of Housing and Urban Development](#), Black Veterans made up 33% of the Veterans experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2019.