

Changing Homelessness, Inc – Rapid Rehousing Exit Case Conferencing
An Innovative Practice in VHA Homeless Program Operations

White Paper

VA



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Developed by
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INTRODUCTION

The VHA Homeless Program Office identifies and disseminates innovative practices in homeless program operations. Community partner and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grantee Changing Homelessness, Inc. (CHI) in Jacksonville, FL has been identified as an organization with an innovative practice for their pre-exit case conferencing review process.

PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Exit review sessions can be effective in decreasing unnecessary program exits from services, while ensuring that Veterans searching for housing will ultimately end their homelessness.

Communities that have comprehensive data on Veterans experiencing homelessness can learn important insights and identify critical, concrete, and operationally-focused opportunities for improvement. When reviewing their comprehensive by-name list (BNL) of actively homeless Veterans in May of 2019, homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) lead agency and SSVF grantee CHI identified an issue that demanded immediate improvement. For those Veterans who exited their SSVF program prior to becoming successfully housed, few if any ever re-engaged with the system. Although these Veterans were still homeless in Jacksonville, FL, and were still tracked on the BNL as being homeless, it was rare for them to later enroll in any other homeless assistance program. Notably, the community as a whole did not have a deliberate, intentional process to re-engage Veterans who had exited any homeless service prior to becoming housed either. Digging deeper, it was observed that CHI's process for exiting Veterans from SSVF was driven primarily by individual case managers and without team review or discussion. How many of those Veterans would still be served by SSVF if there had been a review of the case prior to the exit decision? If structure was added to the process, if more staff were made available to review cases, and if supervisory support to the case managers holistically increased, would this make an impact? Over the Summer of 2019, the CHI's Director of Client Services worked with his program leads worked to develop a possible solution in the form of a Client Exit Checklist and Case Conference Process.



While most conceptualizations of case conferences feature interagency or interdisciplinary team members working towards concrete action plans for treatment and care, this exit case conference review process was made up entirely of CHI staff. When an SSVF case manager identified a Veteran for exit, they submitted an email to a special SSVF Exit Email Distribution Group made up of SSVF Team Leads. No Team Lead reviewed Veterans from their own team. They were given 48 hours to research and review their assigned Veterans prior to a weekly exit case conferencing meeting lasting between 30 to 60 minutes. With each review, the assigned Team Lead provided background information and commentary on the type and quality of services provided. To guide the discussion, an SSVF Exit Case Conference Form was developed (see Appendix A). Between six to eight Veterans were presented at each meeting. The Team Leads then deliberated and came to a decision to either continue program participation with recommendations or discontinue services.

Whenever the two Team Leads could not come to agreement, the Director of Client Services had the final vote. Notably, this tie breaker was only invoked twice, and both times were in favor of retaining the Veteran in services. Regardless of the outcome, the Director of Client services notified the Veteran's case manager of the decision. If the Veteran was to remain in services, the case manager was notified of the recommendations. If the Veteran was to be exited, the case manager completed the Client Exit Checklist (see Appendix B).

During the six months since this process was rolled out, CHI's SSVF program has seen a significant shift in case management service delivery. The new review process and increased supervisory support enabled the teams to identify relevant case factors that could lead to successful lease-up. CHI's SSVF program would, by default, keep Veterans enrolled and engaged in services unless multiple people concurred with the exit. Additionally, the meeting has become a valued mechanism for providing constructive feedback to team members in a

"Were we doing enough to ensure clients were stably housed on that first pass? Had we done our due diligence? Did we inadvertently and unintentionally create a group of soon to be chronically homeless Veterans? These questions forced me to reevaluate how households were exited from our SSVF program."

Robbie Conrad
Director of Client Services
Changing Homelessness, Inc.



way not previously available. **By December 2019, 141 Veterans were reviewed during the pre-exit case conference and 24 Veterans (17 percent) were recommended for continued case management. Interestingly, of the 117 who were recommended for exit following the review, the vast majority exited for positive or appropriate reasons. Additionally, thanks to this project as well as new processes to ensure that discharged Veterans were quickly reconnected to resources, Veterans who were assessment to program enrollment stage of their housing journey saw their baseline average of 40 days and a median of 25 days reduced to an average of 25 days and a median of 14 days.**

CONCLUSION

By adding a team-based review, procedural structure, and supervisory support to the case management services provided, the Exit Case Conferencing Meeting meant that CHI's SSVF program kept Veterans enrolled in services unless indicated. In the context of collective efforts to end Veteran homelessness, this also was an important shift away from Veterans "belonging" to individual providers and towards Veterans being our collective responsibility.

We would like to thank the dedicated staff at Changing Homeless, Inc. in Jacksonville, FL for sharing their practice with us. If you would like more information, please contact Robbie Conrad, Director of Client Services, at rconrad@changinghomelessness.org.



APENDIX A: SSVF EXIT CASE CONFERENCE FORM

SSVF Exit Case Conference Form

General Information

Client HMIS ID#:

SSVF Case Manager:

Team Leads Reviewing Case:

Case Reviewed Date:

Case Commentary Section

General Questions

Why has the Veteran household been selected for closure? Is the Veteran household stably housed?

If no, why not? What steps should be taken to achieve stability?

Has the household been connected with all possible mainstream resources?

Has the household been connected with all possible VA benefits and healthcare, if eligible?

Is there evidence that the case manager provided housing counseling to guarantee stability?

Does the client know of intent to close case? If yes, what are household's feelings on closure?

If no, what steps will case manager take?

What long-term issues remain that SSVF can tackle or require referrals to outside resources?

What post-program HSP Goals can be drafted to guarantee long-term stability of household?

What is the exit destination selected in HMIS for closure? *Consult HMIS Guide, if questions arise.*

Is the household a candidate for a success story? Would client benefit from Veterans Thrive Program?

Non-Compliance

What is the reason for closure?

Is this an issue that cannot be worked around? What solution can be identified?

If the client has fallen out of contact, has case manager followed 30 days after 3rd contact attempt rule?

Did case manager try to find client? If in shelter, or GPD, did case manager pursue?

Sign Off Section

The Team Leads must both agree to close a case based on the file and comments from case manager. If case is determined to be closed, case manager can proceed with SSVF Exit Checklist procedure.

Team Lead #1: _____ case to be remain open case to be closed

Team Lead #2: _____ case to be remain open case to be closed

If no agreement can be reached, the case will be sent to the Director of Client Services for determination.

The Director has determined that: case should remain open case should be closed

Signature: _____

Date: _____



APPENDIX B: CLIENT EXIT CHECKLIST

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program Client Exit Checklist

Exit Case Conference Completed – Approved for Exit

Team Lead #1: _____
Team Lead #2: _____

Client ID: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

General Items

_____ **Exit Interview with Client**

Meeting to review housing counseling elements and provide resource documentation.

_____ **Exit Case Note**

This should reflect the client's progress made since enrollment, client readiness for exit, and justification for exit. Document referrals that were made, connections to benefits, and other services. If exiting for non-communication, provide detailed case note to show due diligence in attempting to reach client, including use of Navigation/Outreach Teams.

_____ **Close HMIS Program Enrollment**

Document Check Upload #1 – Exit Documentation (attach the following items in one upload)

_____ **Client Exit Checklist Form (this document)**

_____ **Successful or Unsuccessful Exit Letter**

Please do not deviate from this letter or alter it as our official information is attached. If any amendments are necessary, please reach out to Program Manager or Director of Client Services. Changing Homelessness and all subgrantee staff to use this document.

_____ **Landlord Letter**

Please do not deviate from this letter or alter it as our official information is attached. If any amendments are necessary, please reach out to Program Manager or Director of Client Services. Changing Homelessness and all subgrantee staff to use this document.

_____ **Client Resource Packet**

List of financial aid, food pantry, and other resources to provide to client at time of exit.

_____ **Final Housing Stability Plan**

This plan should include a finalized monthly budget, new post-exit goals for clients, and relevant referrals to guarantee housing stability remains after exit from SSVF Program.

Document Check Upload #2 – VA Satisfaction Survey Enrollment

_____ **VA Satisfaction Survey Enrollment Screen Capture**

This upload should be a screen capture showing you have enrolled the client in the VA Satisfaction Survey. It should be done within thirty days prior to exiting the client.

