

# **Virtual VA Secretary's Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans Virtual Meeting (ACHV)**

**June 29, 2020**

**2:00-3:00 pm (EST)**

**Meeting Minutes**

The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) convened a one-hour public meeting for the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans to vote on recommendations to include in the draft letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, which will primarily focus on VA's response to COVID-19 on June 29, 2020.

## **Committee Members Present:**

Jennifer Ho, Chair, ACHV; Commissioner, Minnesota Housing  
Tammy Bellofatto, Executive Director of Bayaud Enterprises  
Brad Bridwell, Director of National Operations for Cloudbreak Communities  
Karl Calhoun, Director, Veteran and Recovery Services  
Richard Cho, PhD, Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness  
Steve Como, President, Government Relation Advisors  
Tramecia Garner, LPCC, Chief Operating Officer, Swords to Plowshares  
Sharon Green, Chief Operating Officer, Women Veterans Interactive, Inc.  
Dottie Guy, Program Manager and Vets @ Employee Resource Group Founder, Dropbox  
Susan K. Lee, PhD, MSN, RN, CNE, CPXP, Associate Program Director, School of Health Professions, Health Care Disparities, Diversity & Advocacy  
Kathryn Monet, Chief Executive Officer, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans  
Bilal Mustafa, Community Organizer, Swords to Plowshares  
Abraham Thompson, Jr., DC VAMC Employee and Veteran  
Jessica Venegas, Principal, Strategic Partnerships, Community Solutions

## **Committee Members Absent:**

Charlie Hall, President, Update Warrior Solution

## **Ex Officio Members Absent:**

Ivan Denton, Department of Labor (DOL)  
Cheryl Rawls, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Field Operations, Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)  
Robert Marbut, Executive Director, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)  
Emily Rosenoff, Acting Director, Division of Long-Term Care Policy, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)  
Norm Suchar, Director, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)  
Department of Education (ED), Faatimah Muhammad, Ex Officio Member  
Department of Agriculture (USDA) Ex Officio position currently vacant  
Department of Defense (DoD) – Ex Officio position currently vacant  
Department of Justice (DOJ), - Ex Officio position currently vacant

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**Committee Support Staff Present:**

Anthony Love – Senior Advisor and Director Community Engagement, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Homeless Programs Office (HPO), Designated Federal Officer (DFO)

Leisa Davis—Program Analyst, VHA HPO, Alternate Designated Federal Officer (ADFO)

Shawn Liu – Community Engagement Coordinator, VHA HPO.

**\*Additional attendees may present for a portion or all of the meeting and/or attend for situational awareness.**

Some, but not all, attendees identified themselves by name. Attendees are not required to identify themselves. The following identified themselves by full or partial name:

Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA HPO

Jelessa Burney, Program Specialist, Advisory Committee Management Office, VA

Dana Sullivan, Director, Benefits Inspection Division, Office of Inspector General, VA

Scott Jenkins, Benefits Inspector, Benefits Inspection Division, Office of Inspector General, VA

Lovely Houston, Peer Support Specialist/Patient Advocate, Hampton VA Medical Center Domiciliary, VA

Mollie Lund, BSW, Programs Coordinator, Emergency Solutions Grant and Supportive Services for Veteran Families, Texas Homeless Network

Amy Miller, Senior Manager, Atlas Research

\*Note: Titles, when known, are listed. Members of the public who attend are not required to provide titles when they sign in.

For the record, it is noted that to avoid a conflict of interest, Committee members are required to excuse themselves from the meeting when the Committee discusses applications from their respective institutions or in which a conflict of interest may occur. Members are asked to sign a statement to this effect. This does not apply to "en bloc" actions. No discussions were held that required committee members to excuse themselves.

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**June 29, 2020 – 2:00-2:06 pm Call to Order, Welcome/Opening Remarks, Introduction of Members, Review of Agenda**

**Presenter: Jennifer Ho, Chair, VA Secretary's Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV)**

- The purpose of this special meeting is to vote on recommendations to include in the draft letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, which will primarily focus on VA's response to COVID-19.

**June 29, 2020 – 2:06-2:13 pm-Welcome Remarks**

**Presenter: Monica Diaz, Executive Director, Homeless Programs Office (HPO)**

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**

- Recognition of Leisa Davis, HPO, from VA's Chief of Staff's Office for outstanding work serving as the Alternate Designated Federal Officer.

CARES Act gave VA \$17.2B

(\$300M was given to HPO for Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), Grant Per Diem (GPD), Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV), and purchase of smartphones.)

SSVF – As of end of May, supported 5,000 hotel/motel placements. Supporting pilot for low acuity Veterans. There has also been progress in HUD-VASH voucher utilization.

GPD – April 28, 2020, approval of removal of per-diem payment cap. There has been an average increase of \$24.83/day or \$4M/month.

HCHV CRS – Expand capacity and establish new contracts.

Expansion of telehealth. There is currently a pilot in the Veterans Justice Programs.

May never get away from in person outreach.

Four Corners Brief was recently provided to Congress on COVID-19 testing requests.

**June 29, 2020 – 2:13-2:23 pm Brief Overview of the Recommendations**

**Presenters: Brad Bridwell, ACHV Member**

- First two parts of the draft letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (prepared by Brad Bridwell and the ACHV Subcommittee) lays the groundwork of outlining the need for testing Veterans experiencing homelessness and explores using Homeless Patient Align Care Teams (HPACT) and Patient Aligned Care Teams (HACTs) to dispatch testing.
  - Testing varies widely. Listed below are a few examples:
    - Houston – VAMC supportive of 3<sup>rd</sup> party testing. VA is providing logistic and labor support but is not doing any testing.
    - Phoenix – Multiple communities doing testing. VA was getting in way, sending letters notifying that VA is not responsible if Veterans are billed. At the same time, it pushed them to do testing, but only did testing on GPD Veterans. Many permanent supportive housing (PSH) campuses were ignored.
      - California – Combo of VA, 3<sup>rd</sup> party, and testing and can handle all circumstances: VHA eligible, ineligible, and regular citizens.
    - Hawaii- Combo of VA and 3<sup>rd</sup> party testing.
- Third part of the draft letter focuses on strategy on rapid placements to permanent housing. Many times, Veterans sent back to GPD programs. While there may be isolation, the concentration is still dense.

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- Final part of the draft letter, revisits paragraph 2 of the previous recommendation (noted in last year's annual report) related to the risk of suicide and prevention.

#### **June 29, 2020 – 2:23 -2:24 Questions and Answers**

##### **Presenters: ACHV Members**

- No additional questions were provided.
- Sharon Green commented that she is available to provide assistance.

#### **June 29, 2020 – 2:24 – 2:27 Vote on Recommendations**

##### **Presenters: ACHV Members**

- Sharon Green moved to approve document as written.
- Steve Como seconded motion.
- Motioned was passed unanimously

#### **June 29, 2020 – 2:27-2:30 Next Steps**

##### **Presenter: Anthony Love, Senior Advisor and Director Community Engagement, VHA, HPO, DFO**

- Upon receipt of the letter, Advisory Love will send the letter to the Advisory Committee Management Office, so they can send it to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
- VA will provide written responses (in response to the letter) and forward them to the ACHV.

#### **June 29, 2020 – 2:30-2:35 Closing Remarks**

##### **Presenter: Jennifer Ho, Chair, ACHV**

- Thanked Brad Bridwell and his team for their work on letter.
- Welcomed Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs back to the office.
- Members of meeting will stay on the call to discuss Secretary of Veterans Affairs' visit to Phoenix, AZ. As this is a public meeting, members of the public are welcomed to continue attending the meeting.
- Jennifer turned meeting over to Anthony Love, Senior Advisor and Director, Community Engagement, VHA, HPO, DFO, to continue the discussion.

#### **June 29, 2020 – 2:35-2:45 Additional Discussion (For Situational Awareness -- Not Part of the Regular Agenda)**

##### **Presenter: Brad Bridwell, ACHV Member**

- The Secretary of Veterans Affairs visited the VA facility in Phoenix, AZ on June 29, 2020, to tour and highlight VA's commitment to addressing COVID-19 among Veterans. Brief news report about his visit: <https://www.abc15.com/news/region-phoenix-metro/central-phoenix/u-s-veterans-affairs-secretary-touring-phoenix-facility>.
- The meeting was approximately one hour (with a small group) and a few attendees were called on to ask questions. Overall, looked at the CARES Act Funding in a strategic way. Listed below are few key takeaways:
  - VA hired 19,000 in most recent hiring push for doctors, nurses, and support positions.
  - Public-private partnerships (PPP), including testing strategy. One PPP is established many are being considered, posting at Walmart.

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- ~9M telemedicine visits.
- Partnering with Walmart to set up a telemedicine space in pharmacy. Doctors are 3<sup>rd</sup> party as well. Opening up electronic health record system so that doctors can directly enter the VA system, so that records will not lag or lack information.
- Realignment of homeless programs so that we can better manage the remaining homeless Veterans. Difficulty of having to coordinate this hospital by hospital. Solicited thoughts on potential realignment so that homeless programs have a consistent response.
  - Difficulty going community by community was acknowledged.
  - Discussion of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). VA has permission to use HMIS, but it is still hospital by hospital. Phoenix VA has been entering data into HMIS but has recently decided to cease on October 1, 2020. This could potentially leave holes in data system.

**SUMMARY OF VOTES:**

Vote to approve letter.

**Yea**

Jennifer Ho, Chair, ACHV; Commissioner, Minnesota Housing  
Brad Bridwell, Director of National Operations for Cloudbreak Communities  
Richard Cho, PhD, Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness  
Kathryn Monet, Chief Executive Officer, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans  
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Jessica Venegas, Principal, Strategic Partnerships, Community Solutions  
Abraham Thompson, Jr., DC VAMC Employee and Veteran  
Charlie Hall, President, Update Warrior Solution (electronically voted)

**SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND RESPONSES:**

The Homeless Program Office will work with the appropriate points of contact to acquire the responses to the follow-up action items and share them with the Committee.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Anthony Love adjourned at 2:45 pm on June 29, 2020.

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I hereby certify, that to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.



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Jennifer Ho, Chair, Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans

The minutes will be formerly considered by the committee at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.