

# Office Hours: Permanent Housing Placement National Challenge to House 38,000 Veterans

VHA Homeless Programs Office – May 13, 2022

## VA Homeless Programs Housing Navigation and Progressive Assistance Considerations

### *A System Response is Key to Meeting Our Goals Reminder: Guiding Principles for Reaching Our Goal*

- All Veteran programs are essential to move a Veteran from homelessness into stable housing.
- Success will depend on strong VA and community partnerships.
- Educate partners about the goal and provide progress updates and targeted support requests.
- Clarify roles amongst different programs and pathways to avoid duplication, but programs with available capacity should be ready to pitch in the help get Veterans housed!
- Utilize by-name lists (BNL) disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and other intersectional characteristics and case conferencing to support local efforts and coordinate your response.

### *Program Collaboration Strategies*

- Housing Navigation
  - Supporting Veterans to help them navigate housing search.
  - Understanding and targeting navigation to Veterans who may face the most significant barriers to housing placement.
- Housing Placements
  - Moving Veterans to housing as quickly as possible, using a progressive assistance strategy to respond to needs through flexible, Veteran-centered services and programs. ensuring appropriate levels of support for long term stability and success.
  - Identify interventions that can most rapidly assist Veteran in obtaining housing with consideration for those who may need to transfer to a longer-term subsidy later.

### *What is Housing Navigation?*

- Veterans experiencing homelessness may struggle to find housing on their own, because of the instability of their current situation.
- Some Veterans may have past eviction or criminal history that may make it more difficult for them to find a landlord willing to rent to them.
- A successful navigator:
  - Understands the Veteran's housing preferences.

- Keeps the Veteran engaged in the search process.
- Helps the Veteran in gathering all documents necessary for housing enrollment.
- Accompanies the Veteran in housing search.
- Serves as an advocate with landlords and other resources.
- Navigators may play whatever is necessary throughout the process of matching a person to a housing resource and ensuring a successful move-in.

### *Prioritizing Housing Navigation Support*

- Ideally, any Veteran experiencing homelessness would have access to navigation services that would support them through move-in. However, communities have limited navigation capacity and must identify how to prioritize access to navigation services.
- Housing Navigation is key to supporting Veterans experiencing homelessness move into permanent housing resources as quickly as possible and in housing Veterans who may have been unsuccessful in moving from program enrollment to placement in the past. Navigators may accompany the Veteran through the entire lease-up process.
- **Prioritization strategies can include any or all the following Veterans:**
  - Those with the longest length of homelessness.
  - Veterans closest to voucher expiration.
  - Those with recent evictions and/or significant criminal barriers.
  - Veterans who have been awarded housing vouchers in the past but have not successfully leased up.

### *Strategies to Increase Housing Navigation Capacity*

- Housing navigation resources and capacity will vary across communities. Some potential resource to explore include:
  - Current HUD-VASH contractor agencies (if applicable).
  - Grant and Per Diem (GPD) housing navigation services for Veterans exiting GPD programs.
  - Partnering with GPD Case Management grants to add housing navigation capacity through the [GPD HUD-VASH Collaborative Case Management](#) model.
  - Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) outreach and Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRRC) services for housing navigation support.
  - Veteran-specific peer or advocacy organizations that are naturally poised to provide housing navigation support.
  - Co-enrolling Veterans in various VA homeless programs for housing navigation support.

### *Use Progressive Assistance to Meet Veterans Needs*

- Tailored assistance to each Veteran's individual needs and choices.
- Supports start small. Assistance flexes up or down based on needs.
- Ensures intensive support and financial assistance remains available to those with the greatest needs.

### *Partnerships Can Help Meet Veterans' Needs*

- Coordinate across partners on landlord partnerships and outreach/engagement strategies.

- In some communities, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) rapid re-housing may be the most rapid avenue for housing placement.
- Through SSVF services provided and the local case conferencing process, identify Veterans being served in SSVF who may need more intensive services or long-term affordability, including SSVF Shallow Subsidy, HUD-VASH, or other vouchers.
- The GPD Bridge Housing model and HCHV Contracted Residential Services (CRS) and Low Demand Safe Haven (LDSH) program incorporates co-enrollment with SSVF or HUD-VASH to facilitate expedient transitions to permanent housing
- [GPD Referral for SSVF TFA](#) provides assistance for Veterans in transitional housing all but for the need of financial assistance

### *Best Practices for Program Partnerships*

- Clarifying in writing the roles of case managers/staff when working with Veterans are co-enrolled in programs.
- Case conferencing at enrollment, during housing plans and throughout and duration of service delivery.
- Ensuring seamless communication with the local coordinated entry system to avoid confusion in referrals, enrollments and data management protocol.
- Maintaining regular meetings with an agreed upon frequency to discuss referrals, cases and assess whether any processes need to be adjusted.
- Identifying timelines for program transitions and exits based on the Veteran's housing progress and where each program may be complimenting the other during the initial tenancy phase.
- Ensuring clear consistent messaging to Veterans, property owners, CoC/VA partners on the Veteran's housing plan.
- Identify points of contact for clinical and case management crises.

## Community Example: Collaborative Case Management in Northern California; Hannah Simkins, LICSW, Sacramento HUD-VASH; Angela Upshaw, MPH, MBA: Berkeley Food & Housing Project (BFHP)

### *Collaborative Case Management*

- Sacramento/Auburn (SAC/AUB) HUD-VASH Program was identified as having a high number of unused vouchers:
  - Staffing shortages: In fiscal year (FY) 2021 SAC/AUB HUD-VASH Program (serving 6 counties) had a 40% staffing vacancy.
  - PHA staff turnover.
  - Limited housing stock.
- VA National Office initiative to help VAs struggling with voucher utilization; SAC/AUB HUD-VASH applied for and was approved for a pilot program.
- BFHP Roads Home SSVF Program and Sacramento HUD-VASH had a good working relationship already, BFHP Roads Home SSVF agreed to partner with HUD-VASH on this pilot.

## *Outcomes*

- More homeless Veterans were getting housed!
- By the end of FY 2021, SAC/AUB HUD-VASH was able to allocate more than 80% of the vouchers held by our largest PHA.
- Largest PHA was able to apply for more HUD-VASH vouchers for the first time in three years.
- Strengthened partnership between HUD-VASH and BFHP Roads Home as well as other community providers.

## *Challenges and Solutions*

- Brand new collaboration.
  - Program development approach.
- Different records systems.
  - Joint spreadsheet.
  - Weekly meetings.
- Varying clinical backgrounds between community partners and HUD-VASH case managers.
  - Use HUD-VASH point person to assess veterans, provide staff support/case consultation, make referrals to VA services.
- Veterans and staff experience role confusion.
  - Role definitions.
  - Team meetings that include veteran as active participant.
- Staff turnover.
  - Joint spreadsheet.
  - Points of contact.

## *Lessons Learned*

- Ending homelessness within the veteran population requires collaboration.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Share (knowledge, resources, best practices).
- Be flexible.

## *Future Directions*

- 38k Goal – Working together is the best way to achieve this goal.
  - Strengthen current partnerships.
  - Create new partnerships.
- End homelessness among the Veteran population.

## *Additional Resources*

- [Homeless System Response: Primer on Serving People with High-Acuity Needs](#)
- [GPD Referral Packet for SSVF TFA](#)
- [HUD Rapid Rehousing Roundtable Discussion Series: Assertive Engagement in Practice](#)

## *Wrapping Up*

- The next two planned office hours sessions (May 25th and June 10th) will be cancelled.
- The next session will take place Friday, June 24th.

- To receive the ongoing Outlook Invitation, please email to [VHA11HPO38kGoalSupport@va.gov](mailto:VHA11HPO38kGoalSupport@va.gov).