Helpful Practices: Decreasing Negative Exits in Transitional Housing

- Both GPD grantee and liaison should work collaboratively to review and understand GPD transitional housing performance measure data.
  - Review data on unknown status at exit/Veteran left without consulting program staff.
  - Review data on Veterans being asked to leave for rule violations. Discharging for rule violations should be a rare occurrence.
  - Ensure that both liaison and grantee have a clear understanding of how the performance outcomes are measured, what constitutes an exclusion, and what residential treatment exit form responses correlate to the outcomes.
  - A formal review of performance must be conducted at least quarterly. This includes a discussion on negative discharges and strategic planning on how to improve outcomes as needed (discharging for rule violations should be rare).
- Prior to program admission, assess that the Veteran is a match for the type of grant, bed model, program environment and approach, and rules and expectations. Assess for Veteran choice and clinical appropriateness.
- Ensure Veterans are informed of program rules and expectations at time of intake and reminded throughout their stay.
  - Veterans cannot be expected to follow the rules if they are not aware of expectations and potential consequences.
  - Veterans should know who they can go to if they are struggling or considering leaving the program. A discussion with someone they are comfortable with may prevent an abrupt discharge.
- Grantee and liaison should maintain frequent contact to discuss Veteran status and programmatic items.
  - Liaisons to have a consistent presence at the site to provide training to the grantee, assist with problem-solving, and offer feedback on successes and opportunities for improvement.
  - Grantees must quickly notify the liaison of unplanned exits for collaborative engagement, when needed.
- Both grantee and liaison should meet with Veterans frequently, particularly early on in program participation and when there is a risk of the Veteran leaving the program (whether through discharge for rule violation or through the Veteran leaving of their own decision).
  - The grantee must follow what is written in their grant regarding frequency of contact with Veteran (through chart notes, treatment plans and discussion). The liaison will monitor this.
  - The grantee should increase their contact with Veterans during early program stages as it increases rapport, decreasing the change of the Veteran leaving without consulting program staff.
The liaison should maintain a strong presence at the site, meeting with Veterans in person and providing support, linking Veterans to services, and assisting with steps to permanent housing.

- Liaisons should meet with Veterans who request a meeting, with those who appear to need the support, and with those they have not met with in the last 90 days.
- Schedule some Veterans ahead of time through coordination with the grantee; make sure the Veterans know ahead of time where and when to meet.
- Consider using a sign-in sheet to allow scheduling for Veterans in open time slots.
- Leave some room for flexibility in your schedule and allow some time for unexpected meetings and/or drop-in visits from Veterans.
- Treatment planning and update meetings should include the Veteran, liaison and grantee when appropriate and helpful.

Grantees should proactively plan for the possibility of the Veteran leaving without consulting program staff and take appropriate steps to locate and re-engage the Veteran when it occurs.

- Grantees should collect and update Veteran contact information on a regular basis.
- At time of intake, grantees should assess the Veteran’s support system and emergency points of contact, including obtaining Releases of Information (ROI) for family/friends.
- At time of intake, grantees should assess where the Veteran would be if they were not in the program and where they would go if they left the program unexpectedly, as a matter of safety.
- Grantees should be committed to reaching out to Veterans directly and quickly notifying VA of unplanned exits for collaborative engagement, when needed.
- In the case of an unplanned exit, the grantee and liaison should engage in robust attempts to locate the Veteran in a timely manner. If the grantee re-engages the Veteran in programming, the liaison should enter a Help Desk ticket requesting to remove the exit form that was completed at the time of discharge. This creates a continuous episode of care and does not result in a negative exit. Please note that this flexibility does not extend to billing.

- Promote a Housing-First approach, resulting in a decrease in negative exits for rule violations (with the exception of discharge for safety concerns).
- Liaisons should arrange for trainings on subjects that support Veteran success, bringing in subject matter experts when needed. Training topics could include the following:
  - Methods to locate the Veteran when an unexpected exit occurs
  - Understanding HOMES exit form responses and performance measure target
  - Trauma-informed care
  - Harm reduction
- Grantees are required, per signed grant agreement, to engage in a low barrier approach, with discharge as a last resort.
  - Grantees should involve the liaison in discussions early on if it appears the Veteran might be asked to leave for a rule violation.
- Grantee staff should meet the Veterans where they are, not applying a uniform “one size fits all” approach.
- Grantees should focus on engagement rather than strict requirements around case management expectations and/or group attendance.
- Grantees should offer substance use/mental health supports on-site when able, referring to community resources and the VA when appropriate.
- Grantees should create an environment in which Veterans feel comfortable and supported.
- Peer supports should be incorporated into programming where available and appropriate.
- Consider a resident matching program.
- More established residents are matched one-on-one with new residents entering the program to help them get acquainted with the site, the staff, and the residents.
- Policies and procedures should be established to implement this approach.
- Promote a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Consider putting up posters that support LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Have clearly established policies and procedures for discriminatory behavior.
- Attempt to hire staff that reflect the population.
- Empower residents by giving them a voice.
- Establish a resident council.
- Hold weekly or biweekly house meetings.
- Provide an avenue for making suggestions, such as regularly conducted surveys and/or a suggestion box.
- Invite successful alumni to speak at house meetings.

- **Help Veterans visualize the future in their own home and begin discharge planning at point of entry. Celebrate small steps to success!**