

# Options for Social Isolation Under the COVID-19 National Emergency Guidance for VA-Funded Community Homeless Programs

The following options have been developed by the Homeless Programs Office to provide official guidance regarding use of existing program authorities to support COVID-19 isolation efforts. Please note, guidance may change in this evolving situation, and updates to this guidance will be provided when received. Note, this guidance is as of **December 28, 2020**.

## Grant and Per Diem

The GPD Program Office may work with grantees to authorize additional sites of care to assist with social distancing efforts and/or to provide quarantine/isolation spaces for symptomatic or vulnerable Veterans. Required inspections may be conducted virtually, if applicable, using [video technologies](#) (e.g., FaceTime, Skype). Signatures from the inspectors and the VAMC Director are still required on the inspection package. *Note: When inspections are performed virtually due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, it is understood that 1) the scope of the inspection may be limited because of virtual technology capacities, and 2) the inspection outcome may change when VAMC staff perform on-site inspections.*

### Isolation Option 1: Grantee has space at existing location

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- Grantee proposes using additional space within their current site (e.g., second floor space or staff room as planned isolation area).
- If the site has already passed inspection, no additional inspections are required. Grantees and Liaisons are required to maintain local records indicating the use of this space.

### Isolation Option 2: Grantee does not have space at existing location

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- Grantee proposes a new site not currently written into their grant
- Grantee sends a [Change of Scope](#) request through their Liaison to the GPD National Program Office for expeditious review. An inspection is required.
- Modified inspection process may be used to facilitate rapid movement of Veterans.
  - Veterans can be placed in a facility immediately for a period of up to 15 calendar days to provide the VAMC time to conduct an inspection.
  - If the site was previously inspected and approved for HCHV within the last 12 months, this inspection will be accepted for temporary placement of GPD-served Veterans.

### Isolation Option 3: Use of another GPD facility

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- Grantee does not have space, but another operational GPD grantee does and is willing to take the Veteran.
- The Veteran can be transferred to that location with discharge from the current grantee's program and admission to the new grantee's program.
- No inspection or change of scope needed if the new GPD site has been already inspected because they are an existing grantee.

### Isolation Option 4: Use of local motel/hotel room

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- Veterans may be placed in a hotel/motel room for COVID-19-related reasons, including facilitating isolation, quarantine, social distancing efforts, and/or controlling an outbreak. Time-limited use of hotels/motels may occur during the pandemic to facilitate rapid movement of Veterans into safe locations.

- To use hotel/motel space, the grantee must have a plan to check on Veterans daily (remote or virtual contact is allowed) for wellness checks, to provide support services, and to facilitate meals.
- In cases where the Grantee is relocating the GPD site to the hotel/motel (not limited to isolation/quarantine spaces for a few Veterans)—and the move will last longer than 30 days—a Change of Scope request approved by the GPD Program Office and an inspection by the VA Medical Center are required. The GPD Program Office is available for consultation as needed.
- Veterans in hotels/motels are required to be counted in the monthly census and Grantees may not exceed their authorized number of beds. The Grantee may bill at their authorized per diem rate for the bed days of care provided.

## HCHV Contract Residential Services

The HCHV Program Office provides the following options regarding HCHV Contract Residential Services (CRS). Please note, as HCHV Contracts are held at the local level, please ensure that you have frequent contact with the assigned HCHV Contracting Officer (CO) to ensure that these options can be executed based on the requirements of the contract.

### **Isolation Option 1: CRS Provider has space at existing location**

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- Provider is proposing to use additional space within their current site (second floor unoccupied space or staff office that has now been turned into isolation area).
- The site has been inspected; HCHV Liaison should ensure the contract Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) and CO are aware and the liaison and provider should maintain local records.

### **Isolation Option 2: CRS Provider does not have space at existing location**

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- Provider proposes a new site that is not currently a site include in their contract, but that their agency has access to.
- HCHV Liaison and/or COR request that the CO completes an expeditious contract modification with the knowledge that the provider is willing to do so.
- HCHV Program Office guidance regarding modified inspection process may be used to facilitate rapid movement of Veterans with the agreement of the CO.
  - Inspections may be conducted virtually, as applicable and acceptable to the CO, using video. The inspector and VAMC Director must still sign the inspection package.
  - If the site was previously inspected and approved within the last 12 months for GPD, this inspection will be accepted for temporary placement of Veterans in HCHV CRS, with approval of the CO.

### **Isolation Option 3: Use of another HCHV CRS facility**

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- CRS Provider does not have space, but another existing HCHV CRS Provider does and is willing to take the Veteran.
- The Veteran can be transferred to that location with discharge from the current HCHV CRS program and admission to the new HCHV CRS program.
- No inspection needed because site was already inspected as an existing HCHV CRS Provider.

## Isolation Option 4: Use of local hotel/motel room

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- Veterans may be placed in a hotel/motel room for COVID-19-related reasons, including facilitating isolation, quarantine, social distancing efforts, and/or controlling an outbreak. Time-limited use of hotels/motels may occur during the pandemic to facilitate rapid movement of Veterans into safe locations.
- The HCHV Liaison and/or the COR request that the Contracting Officer complete an expeditious review and required contract modification with the knowledge that the provider has a plan to utilize this quarantine/isolation option.
  - In order to use hotel/motel space for this purpose, the provider must have a plan to check on the Veteran daily (remote contact allowed) for wellness checks and supportive services and to facilitate meals.
  - Veterans in hotels/motels are required to be counted in the monthly census and providers may not exceed their authorized number of beds. Providers may bill at their authorized per diem rate for the bed days of care provided.

## Supportive Services for Veteran Families\*

### Emergency Housing in Hotel/Motels

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- Designed to reduce exposure of vulnerable populations to congregate environments where they may be at greater risk from contracting COVID-19.
- Guidance available on [www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf](http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf)
- Recorded webinar available at <https://tacinc.adobeconnect.com/pvg82h3q893j/>

### Transition-In-Place for HUD-VASH

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- In areas where Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) can no longer complete Housing Quality Standards (HQS) due to shutdowns, SSVF may use Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) to assist Veterans with moving into the prospective HUD-VASH unit while it awaits the HQS. SSVF can use TFA to cover move-in costs (Security Deposit and Rental Assistance) to avoid delays in securing permanent housing. TFA can continue until PHAs resume functioning and rental costs can be transitioned to HUD-VASH voucher support.
- SSVF grantees may provide housing search assistance and housing placement for Veterans participating in HUD-VASH and looking for housing. This will allow Veterans to secure prospective housing units while waiting for PHAs to complete the voucher process or HQS inspection.

### Expanded Access to Homeless Prevention (HP)

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- The requirement that a minimum of 60 percent of financial assistance be spent on literally homeless Veteran households is waived indefinitely during the pandemic.

### Food Assistance

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- SSVF grantees are currently allowed to spend up to \$500 per household on food assistance when no other food resource is available. That \$500 limit has been waived.

*\*Resources are only available for eligible Veteran households enrolled in a SSVF program. These resources are limited and close coordination between local VAMCs and SSVF grantees is necessary to prioritize the most vulnerable.*