



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

VHA Homeless Program Office

Fact Sheet

VHA Health Care for Homeless Veterans

Overview

VA offers a wide array of special programs and initiatives specifically designed to help homeless Veterans live as self-sufficiently and independently as possible. VA is the only Federal agency that provides substantial hands-on assistance directly to homeless persons. VA's major homeless-specific programs constitute the largest integrated network of homeless treatment and assistance services in the country.

Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)

The HCHV Program was developed from the original Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill (HCMI) Program, a 6-month pilot project established by Public Law (Pub. L.) 100-6, February 12, 1987. Recognition of VA's ability to quickly launch HCMI prompted an extension of funding and authorization of the program by subsequent legislation (Pub. L. 101-237). After several years of successful operation, the need to better define the program's principles and scope became apparent. This redefining coupled with the potentially stigmatizing label of "chronically mentally ill" led to the program being renamed as the Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program (HCHV).

The central goal of HCHV programs is to reduce homelessness among Veterans by engaging and connecting homeless Veterans with healthcare and other needed services. HCHV programs target chronically homeless Veterans, especially those with serious mental health diagnoses and/or substance use disorders, and provide outreach, case management and community based residential services to ensure that Veterans have access to programs that provide quality housing and services that meet the needs of these special populations.

HCHV Outreach Services

HCHV staff conduct outreach to identify homeless Veterans encountered in encampments, shelters, drop-in centers, and other community locations. The intent of outreach is to provide Veterans with information on resources such as housing assistance, medical and psychiatric inpatient and outpatient treatment programs, other community-based residential programs or social services and encourage Veterans to participate in the assessment of and engagement with these services. HCHV works to lower barriers and maintain easy access for Veterans to receive services in VA and the community.

Stand Downs

Stand Downs for Homeless Veterans serve as an effective outreach strategy to engage homeless Veterans and present them with longer term treatment and housing opportunities. Stand Downs are typically one to three-day events and are coordinated between local VAs, assorted government and community agencies that serve the homeless. Stand Downs provide services to homeless Veterans such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, VA and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to

a variety of other necessary services, such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment.

Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRC)

HCHV CRRCs are a collaborative effort of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the community, service providers, and agency partners which provide an open door, one-stop hub for homeless Veterans. CRRCs are located in 31 strategically selected areas to provide both a refuge from the streets and a central location to engage homeless Veterans in services. Veterans are referred to health and mental health care resources, job development programs, housing options, and other VA and non-VA benefits.

HCHV Case Management Services

The goal of HCHV case management is to reach and engage all homeless Veterans who are disconnected or under-connected to critical medical and mental health services, community support and most importantly appropriate housing interventions with a significant emphasis on those Veterans who are unsheltered and most vulnerable.

HCHV clinicians provide three distinct types of case management:

Homeless Case Management is generally short-term and focused on providing access to housing resources.

CRRC Case Management Services is initiated by Veterans who walk into the CRRC seeking services or thorough outreach to homeless Veterans performed by CRRC staff. The focus of CRRC Case Management is on providing access to housing resources and encouraging Veteran involvement with appropriate VA and community-based providers throughout the continuum of services and is usually short term in duration.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) case management is initiated through VA and/or community partner referrals. PSH Case Management assists Veterans not served in HUD-VASH by ensuring Veterans have access to clinical and social support services necessary to maintain independent housing.

HCHV Contract Residential Services Programs

Under 38 U.S.C. 2031 VA can contract for care, treatment and rehabilitative services for eligible Veterans with community-based facilities. The HCHV Contract Residential Service (CRS) program provides funding directly to VA medical centers (VAMCs), enabling them to award locally established contracts to community-based agencies. The VAMC has direct oversight of these contracts, allowing them to create a contract that fills service gaps for the homeless Veterans in their specific community. Each contract provides short-term residential care and treatment to eligible Veterans who need an immediate housing placement as they seek permanent housing and/or additional care and services. As these contracts are established between the VAMC and the selected provider, the VAMC is responsible to ensure that these programs comply with the contract terms and the current HCHV authority.

In FY2020, HCHV funding supported 310 contracts with over 3,500 available beds in 49 states, Puerto Rico and Guam.

There are two distinct levels of HCHV Contract Residential Services:

Contract Emergency Residential Services (CERS) programs target and prioritize homeless Veterans transitioning from literal street homelessness, Veterans being discharged from institutions, including those in need of medical respite, and Veterans who recently became homeless and require safe and stable living arrangements while they seek permanent housing. Lengths of stay in CRS typically range from 30 to 90 days with the option to extend based on clinical need. (314 CRS programs with over 3,000 beds nationally)

Low Demand Safe Havens (LDSH) are 24-hour staffed transitional residences with private or semi-private accommodations, that target the population of hard-to-reach, chronically homeless Veterans with mental illness and/or substance use problems who require a low-demand environment. The low-demand or non-intrusive environment is designed to re-establish trust and motivate the homeless Veteran to seek needed treatment services and transitional and permanent housing options. Lengths of stay in LDSH programs are typically 6 months with the option to extend based on clinical need. (20 LDSH programs with 434 beds nationally)

Coordinated Entry Initiative

HCHV is the lead program within the national Homeless Program Office for VA's Coordinated Entry Initiative which provides guidance to VAMCs regarding their roles and responsibilities in each of their local Continuums of Care (CoC) and CoC's coordinated entry systems.

The CoC framework is designed to promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness, including Veterans homelessness, making local VA support and participation essential to the CoC's coordinated entry system. All VAMCs are expected to be fully engaged with each of their local CoCs in a few key areas; case conferencing, maintenance of the By-Name-Lists, assessment, prioritization and referrals of homeless Veterans, and data sharing. HCHV has developed detail expectations and requirements for each of these areas of the initiative in addition to providing technical assistance to sites.

Brief Overview of Numbers:

- HCHV 2020 President's Budget: \$160,864,000
- Number of HCHV-funded positions nationally: 411
- Average # of Veterans served through HCHV programs annually: 150,000
- Approximate number of Veterans served through Stand Downs: 79,600

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