

Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION HOMELESS PROGRAMS OFFICE



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



This report reflects data as of end of fiscal year 2020 (Sept. 30, 2020) unless otherwise stated.
(Data from some programs are reported only by calendar year.)

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Executive Director,
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Message From the Executive Director

As Executive Director of the Homeless Programs Office (HPO), I am proud to present the Veterans Health Administration Homeless Programs Office Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report.

Since 2010, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has helped more than 850,000 Veterans and their families avoid or exit homelessness. The overall decline in Veteran homelessness over the past 11 years points to HPO's ability to effectively implement the Housing First approach; innovate service delivery; and collaborate with cross-agency, interagency, and community partners. Major accomplishments over the years include:

- **Dramatically reducing the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness since 2010.** The commitment of VA and the federal government to ending Veteran homelessness has led to nearly a 50% reduction in the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness on any given night.
- **Proving that ending Veteran homelessness is possible.** With the introduction of the Mayors' Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness and the use of federal criteria and benchmarks that gave communities a complete picture of their response to Veteran homelessness, 81 communities and three states effectively ended Veteran homelessness. This proves that with a commitment from leadership, the dedication of resources, and active coordination of VA and community services, it is possible to end Veteran homelessness.
- **Helping over 15,000 Veterans obtain employment.** To support housing stability, VA connects Veterans experiencing homelessness with a range of employment services and job opportunities. In FY 2020, this resulted in over 15,000 Veterans in VA homeless programs obtaining employment.
- **Providing prevention assistance and hotel placements.** In FY 2020, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program provided prevention and rapid rehousing assistance to over 100,000 people.

Homeless Programs Office

In FY 2020, the coronavirus pandemic presented many new challenges to ensuring the health and safety of Veterans and their families. HPO enacted a comprehensive suite of strategies to stave off a spike in Veteran homelessness and protect the most vulnerable from the virus. These strategies included:

- Offering guidance on sanitation and disease prevention to transitional and homeless shelter service providers.
- Engaging in daily technical assistance activities and communications with program staff.
- Providing COVID-19 testing in congregate settings.
- Increasing available housing options and implementing significant program flexibilities.

With the passage of the \$300 million Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in March 2020, HPO received additional funding for the SSVF, Grant and Per Diem (GPD), and Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) programs. These funds helped the programs achieve successes such as these:

- SSVF placed over 21,000 Veterans living on the streets into hotels, allowing them to safely isolate or quarantine during the pandemic.
- HCHV utilized \$20 million in CARES Act funds to establish new contracts with residential facilities and expand existing contracts to enable these facilities to make it possible for Veterans living there to follow social distancing and isolation guidelines.
- GPD waived the requirement to discharge Veterans from the program after an absence of 14 days and allocated \$40 million to reimburse grantees for beds used.

Additionally, HPO's Clinical Operations Business Intelligence section procured and disseminated over 31,000 cellular phones and iPads with prepaid data plans to increase Veterans' access to telehealth and help them stay connected with their caregivers and support systems.

This annual report highlights each HPO program's accomplishments in providing case management and other services — housing, financial, physical and mental health, employment — to prevent Veteran homelessness or ensure that it is rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

Homeless Programs Office



Through HPO's collaboration with multiple VA administrations and offices, other federal agencies, and numerous community-based partners thousands of Veterans and their families have successfully exited homelessness. In addition to delivering program services directly to Veterans, HPO provides grants to organizations to fill critical gaps in transitional housing, case management support, permanent housing, and other services. The breadth and impact of HPO's programs and services are illustrated in the following sections of this report:

- **Housing Programs**
- **Employment Services**
- **Health Care Services**
- **Veterans Justice Programs**
- **Community Programs**
- **Interagency Programs and Services**
- **Research**

Each section provides a brief description of specific programs and services along with data that shows the impact on and value to Veterans.

Report Overview



VA's housing programs are guided by the **Housing First** approach, which is based on the premise that when Veterans have a place to call home, they are better able to benefit from supportive services. The key principles of **Housing First** as they are applied under VA's housing programs are **respect, warmth, and compassion for all Veterans; Veteran choice and self-determination; recovery orientation focused on individual well-being; and use of harm reduction strategies. Housing First features rapid, streamlined entry into a housing program with no preconditions such as sobriety or completion of alcohol or drug treatment for obtaining tenancy. As Veterans achieve their goals, establish recovery, and gain independence, the services they receive are continually adjusted to meet their needs.**

Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program

HUD-VASH is a collaborative program between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and VA that combines HUD housing choice rental vouchers with VA case management services. Congress has appropriated funds for more than 100,000 housing choice vouchers for HUD-VASH. The program has served more than 180,000 Veterans and their families since FY 2012. The HUD-VASH program is targeted to Veterans experiencing homelessness who have the greatest need for case management and supportive services to maintain permanent housing. This includes Veterans with serious mental illness, physical health diagnoses, and substance use disorders. Once a Veteran and family members find permanent housing, they agree to participate in case management services designed to help them recover from the physical and mental health problems and other issues that contributed to or resulted from their homelessness. These services, delivered by VA, may include mental health and substance use disorder treatment, primary health care, support for integration into the community, and employment assistance. For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp.

HUD-VASH PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

Veteran finds dream home through HUD-VASH voucher

Army Veteran Laddie McMillian faced declining health and housing instability. After losing his home, he entered the Veterans Restoration Quarters, then later secured permanent housing through the HUD-VASH program. But the help and support he received from HPO didn't end there. To read the full story of how this Veteran received housing assistance and care management through a HUD-VASH and Geriatrics and Extended Care program collaboration, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/78841/veteran-finds-dream-home-hud-vash-voucher.



MORE THAN 13,000 VETERANS MOVED INTO HUD-VASH HOUSING



NEARLY 80,000 VETERANS WHO HAD EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS WERE STABLY HOUSED AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR

Housing Programs



Tribal HUD-VASH

According to the 2010 Census, more than 150,000 Veterans identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN) alone. Because many tribal members sheltering in the homes of family or friends do not consider themselves “homeless” but “houseless,” most tribes do not have homeless shelters, safe havens, or other homeless resources. The Tribal HUD-VASH program seeks to house AI/AN Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness on or near their home reservations, so they can live near their families and have access to culturally appropriate and traditional healing practices. Through a hybrid Indian Housing Block Grant, Tribal HUD-VASH provides rental assistance from HUD in the form of a grant instead of vouchers. AI/AN Veterans enrolled in the program receive tailored VA case management and clinical services to help them exit homelessness.

For more information, visit hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih/tribalhudvash.

TRIBAL HUD-VASH PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

Housing assistance programs get Veterans back on track

Army National Guard Veteran Joseph Harrison got a new start on life thanks to the Tribal HUD-VASH program. After leaving the service, Harrison faced challenges transitioning to civilian life, including brushes with the law, substance abuse, and difficulty maintaining relationships. With help from HUD and VA, Harrison learned to look forward rather than in the rearview mirror. He now receives mental health care and support from the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane, Washington. He credits his Tribal HUD-VASH case manager, Heidi Stewart, with getting him back on track. To read the full story of how Tribal HUD-VASH helped this Veteran with housing assistance and supportive services, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/66693/housing-assistance-programs-get-veterans-back-track.



APPROXIMATELY 354 VETERANS ENROLLED

After Veterans are enrolled, they work with a VA case manager through a multistage process before they are housed. VA case managers screen the Veterans for VA eligibility, assist with gathering documents, refer the enrollees to the Tribally Designated Housing Entity for housing criteria screening, locate or identify available housing units, and then help the Veterans move into housing.



MORE THAN 350 VETERANS WERE HOUSED WITH A TRIBAL HUD-VASH RENTAL SUBSIDY AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program

SSVF is designed to rapidly rehouse and provide guidance and case management services to Veteran families (defined as a single Veteran or a family in which the head of household or the spouse of the head of household is a Veteran) who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. VA grants funds to private nonprofit organizations and consumer cooperatives to help Veteran families access a full range of community benefits designed to prevent homelessness. Through SSVF, Veterans can obtain VA and other benefits that may include health care, daily living services, financial planning services, transportation, legal services, childcare, and housing counseling. Time-limited payments to landlords, utility companies, moving companies, and licensed childcare providers may also be provided to help Veterans stay in or acquire permanent housing.

In addition to SSVF's \$380 million annual appropriation, \$602 million was allocated to the SSVF program in FY 2020 from the **CARES Act** to provide emergency housing and homelessness prevention assistance to very low income Veteran families. Between April and September 2020, SSVF grantees placed over 17,400 Veterans in hotels and motels to enable them to avoid the increased risk of COVID-19 transmission in congregate shelters, in homeless encampments, or on the streets. CARES funds will also be used to mitigate the expected wave of evictions and potential homelessness resulting from extensive unemployment caused by the coronavirus pandemic. For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp.

SSVF PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

Veteran rebuilt life with assistance from SSVF

After moving to Oregon, Navy Veteran Rodney Navarro participated for nine months in a program for substance abuse and posttraumatic stress disorder at the White City Veterans Rehabilitation Center. After completing the program, he applied for housing assistance from Access, a nonprofit SSVF grantee that provides supportive services to low-income Veterans living in or transitioning to permanent housing thanks to grants from SSVF. To read the full story of how Access provided supportive services to help Navarro find housing, visit [blogs.va.gov/VAntage/77127/veteran-rebuilt-life-assistance-ssvf](https://va.gov/VAntage/77127/veteran-rebuilt-life-assistance-ssvf).



MORE THAN 77,500 VETERANS SERVED



NEARLY 20,000 CHILDREN IN MORE THAN 10,300 HOUSEHOLDS SERVED



ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO MORE THAN 10,000 WOMEN



OF THOSE VETERANS DISCHARGED FROM THE SSVF PROGRAM, 80% OBTAINED PERMANENT HOUSING

Housing Programs



Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program

The GPD program awards grants to community-based agencies that provide transitional housing and supportive services to help Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and income, and achieve greater self-determination. VA also provides per diem payments to nonprofit organizations to help offset the operational costs of these programs. GPD grantees are free to choose the housing models that will best meet the needs of Veterans who are homeless in their communities. Grants from the GPD program usually consist of a capped per diem payment from VA to community organizations. However, an \$88 million allocation to this program through the CARES Act has allowed VA to waive per diem limits during the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY 2020, VA was thus able to help GPD grantees provide all needed emergency housing and supportive services to Veterans, including emergency placement for those who needed physical isolation for their safety or for the safety of others. For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp.

GPD PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

Veteran finds permanent housing with GPD program support

In poor health without a dime in his pocket, Veteran Frank Ooten was trying to quit drinking and straighten out his life. That's when a court representative referred him to Steps House, a housing assistance program in Knoxville, Tennessee, that helped him get back on his feet.

Founded in 1991, Steps House has 32 homes, with 140 beds, that provide shelter to people working to overcome addiction or homelessness — as long as they refrain from using drugs or alcohol. Thanks to grants from the GPD program, Steps House is able to dedicate 40 beds to Veterans who are experiencing homelessness. To read the full story of how Steps House helped Ooten build positive connections with other Veterans, mend family relationships, and find stable housing, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/79064/veteran-finds-permanent-housing-gpd-program-support.



OVER 17,000 VETERANS ENTERED GPD TRANSITIONAL HOUSING



OVER 10,600 VETERANS EXITED GPD TO PERMANENT HOUSING



OVER 25,500 VETERANS WERE SERVED BY GPD GRANTS

Housing Programs



Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) Program

The DCHV program provides intensive residential care for Veterans with complex, co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, medical conditions, and psychosocial needs. Veterans receive medical, mental health, vocational, educational, and social services from interdisciplinary teams to help them overcome the conditions that inhibit their ability to exit homelessness. The program emphasizes self-care and personal responsibility and provides long-term support throughout each Veteran's transition to stability and housing independence. For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/dchv.asp.

DCHV PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

Domiciliary Veterans harvest benefits from new garden

At VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, Veterans in the DCHV program worked with staff to plant a garden. Like the victory gardens planted around the country during both world wars, the garden planted in May 2020 by Veterans of the domiciliary program has brought a bounty of benefits, including healthy food from their harvest and the cultivation of life skills. To read the full story of how this DCHV program is helping Veterans at risk of homelessness have a safe, stable place to call home while receiving wraparound care, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/78325/domiciliary-veterans-harvest-benefits-new-garden.



MORE THAN 4,500 VETERANS SERVED



MORE THAN 2,000 OPERATIONAL BEDS AT 44 SITES IN SUPPORT OF VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Note: DCHVs typically serve over 6,000 Veterans each year. The reduction in the number of unique Veterans served in FY 2020 reflects COVID-related interruptions in care. In response to the pandemic, admissions were curtailed, with programs closed or operating at significantly reduced capacity for a portion of the year.

Housing Programs

Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence (CWT/TR) Program

The CWT/TR program is a unique residential mental health program that provides beds in a therapeutic community and focuses on active rehabilitation to aid Veterans in community integration. The work program offers multiple vocational options leading to job development and placement. At the end of FY 2020, there were 41 CWT/TR programs with 548 operational beds. The number of completed episodes of CWT/TR treatment during FY 2020 was 655, and the average length of stay was approximately 158 days.

Of the Veterans discharged from the CWT/TR program during FY 2020, 54% of those eligible for employment had secured competitive employment. In FY 2020, 73% of Veterans discharged from CWT/TR were discharged to permanent housing. An additional 8% were discharged to another Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program.



520 ADMISSIONS



714 DISCHARGES



832 UNIQUE PATIENTS SERVED

Note: CWT/TR typically serves over 1,000 Veterans each year. The reduction in the number of unique Veterans served in FY 2020 reflects COVID-related interruptions in care. In response to the pandemic, admissions were curtailed, with programs closed or operating at significantly reduced capacity for a portion of the year.

Enhanced-Use Lease (EUL) Program

The EUL program, managed by VA's Office of Asset Enterprise Management, provides a mechanism for a non-VA entity to develop and operate supportive housing for homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families on VA property. Through this program, VA out-leases underutilized real estate under its jurisdiction or control to the private sector for up to 75 years for the purpose of developing supportive housing for homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families. In addition to providing Veteran residents with close proximity to VA physical and mental health care, EUL housing often offers onsite computer and laundry facilities, fitness centers, haircuts, and supportive services such as financial management and job training. The 52 housing EULs that have been executed to date have housed 2,548 Veterans. For more information, visit va.gov/assetmanagement.



7 EUL HOUSING PROJECTS WERE ESTABLISHED ON VA PROPERTY



THE 7 NEW EUL HOUSING PROJECTS PROVIDED 227 UNITS OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Housing Programs

Employment can be a key element in helping Veterans avoid or exit homelessness. VA's employment services help Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness secure and maintain jobs in their communities.

Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services (HVCES)

HVCES staff, who are embedded in homeless programs at VA medical centers (VAMCs), complement medical center-based employment services and create a bridge to employment opportunities and resources in the local community. HVCES is staffed by Vocational Development Specialists, who function as Community Employment Coordinators (CECs) and Employment Specialists. CECs are funded at each VAMC. The HCHV and HUD-VASH programs have funded Employment Specialists at a limited number of VAMCs based on local needs. HVCES staff work with VA homeless program and employment services staff, including those working in the CWT and Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) programs, to identify employment resources for Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including those who have experienced chronic homelessness. They also collaborate with external community, state, and federal partners to provide training and support services that are not available within VA and to help employers and Veterans address any issues with workplace adjustment. For more information on employment services for Veterans experiencing homelessness, visit va.gov/homeless/employment_programs.asp.



APPROXIMATELY 6,547 VETERANS EXITED RESIDENTIAL HOMELESS PROGRAMS WITH COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

(GPD, Low-Demand Safe Haven, and HCHV Contract Residential Services)



THE RATE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR VETERANS HOUSED THROUGH HUD-VASH WAS 46.32%



OVER 15,489 NEWLY DOCUMENTED, UNIQUE INSTANCES OF EMPLOYMENT FOR VETERANS WHO ENGAGED IN OR EXITED FROM VA HOMELESS PROGRAMS OR SERVICES

HVCES PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

Veteran finds new career with assistance from HVCES

After Army and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran Samantha Norment was discharged from the Army Reserve in 2010, she worked several temporary jobs, but she was unable to secure stable employment, leaving her discouraged. Then, after leaving an unhealthy relationship, Norment became homeless. She decided to reach out to VA for help.

VA referred her to the local HVCES staff, who provided employment assistance, and to the GPD program, which offered her housing and health care assistance. To read the full story of how Norment found a new career, found a home to live in with her three daughters, and experienced both personal and professional growth with help from HVCES and other homeless programs, visit [blogs.va.gov/VAntage/79273/veteran-finds-new-career-assistance-hvces](https://va.gov/VAntage/79273/veteran-finds-new-career-assistance-hvces).

Employment Services



Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) Service

VR&E helps Veterans with service-connected disabilities prepare for, find, and retain suitable jobs. VR&E staff determine Veterans' abilities, skills, and interests and then help them develop their resume, hone their interview skills, and conduct their job search. They also provide direct placement services and on-the-job training. For more information, visit va.gov/HOMELESS/employment_programs.asp.

VR&E SUCCESS STORY

VR&E makes a difference one Veteran at a time

Army Veteran David Norman first met Desiree Dial, a Veteran and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, in February 2017 when he applied to the VR&E program. He had just left the Army and was seeking employment and transition assistance, which led him to Bethel University, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in organizational leadership.

It was Dial, herself a Veteran, who inspired Norman to “pay it forward.” He now works as a financial counselor at Fort Campbell in Kentucky, where he helps transitioning service members understand how VR&E can lead them — as it did him — to successful civilian employment.

Dial, who works with Veterans pursuing a variety of career tracks, says that transitioning service members are often unsure what type of work they want to pursue straight out of the military. Some are afraid that certain career choices could aggravate their disabilities. To read the full story of how Dial and Norman ended up helping each other through VR&E and how they create lasting, positive impacts on many other Veterans, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/72742/vre-makes-difference-one-veteran-time.

Employment Services

Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Program

CWT is a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) clinical vocational rehabilitation program offered at every VAMC. CWT's mission is to help Veterans overcome barriers to employment and secure and maintain community-based competitive employment. Career planning and job retention are elements of all CWT services, which include:

- **Transitional Work**—A preemployment vocational program that operates in VA medical centers and in business and industry locations.
- **Supported Employment**—Support for Veterans with psychosis or other severe mental illnesses, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, or with physical disabilities, such as traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury, who cannot function independently in employment without intensive, ongoing support.
- **Community Based Employment Services**—A range of services leading to direct placement in competitive employment, where an employer hires the Veteran, and the Veteran receives continuing clinical support.
- **Vocational Assistance**—A set of assessment, guidance, counseling, and other short-term services designed to help Veterans search and interview for jobs and to succeed once they have been hired without the need for ongoing follow-up support.
- **Supported Self-Employment**—Guidance on business practices, training, networking opportunities, and linkages with community financial institutions that help Veterans with disabilities achieve the benefits of self-employment.
- **Supported Education**—Individualized supports for Veterans engaged in education and training programs, and linkages with educational facilities that will help Veterans achieve their instructional goals.

For more information, visit va.gov/HEALTH/cwt/veterans.asp.

CWT PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

63,000 Veterans benefit from VA's Compensated Work Therapy program

Each year, more than 63,000 Veterans benefit from VA's CWT program. Approximately 1,000 CWT Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Managers, and Peer Support Specialists make their participation possible. CWT services are integral to helping Veterans overcome employment barriers and return to meaningful employment.

"The Compensated Work Therapy program taught me how to retrain my mind to doing the right thing, how to be a team player, and how to be accountable," said Jerry Weaver, a CWT graduate and VA employee. "The CWT staff didn't give up on me and kept welcoming me back with open arms."

For more of Weaver's and other Veterans' shared experiences receiving assistance from VA's CWT program, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/80197/63000-veterans-benefit-vas-compensated-work-therapy.



MORE THAN 52,500 VETERANS WERE SERVED



41.26% OF 10,311 NEW ENROLLMENTS WERE HOMELESS

Employment Services

Quality health care services are immensely important in the effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans. Veterans whose health is successfully managed can direct their attention to other life needs and goals, including employment, education, caring for their children, and more.

Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)

HCHV's mission is to reduce homelessness among Veterans by connecting them with health care and other needed services. Through outreach, case management, and Contract Residential Services (CRS), HCHV helps place Veterans experiencing chronic homelessness — especially those with serious mental health diagnoses or substance use disorders — in VA or community-based programs that provide quality housing and services that meet their specific needs.

In FY 2020, \$10 million was allocated to HCHV through the CARES Act to provide emergency shelter and supportive services during the COVID-19 pandemic. These supportive services included placements for Veterans needing emergency shelter or isolation to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

For more information about HCHV, visit va.gov/homeless/hchv.asp.



MORE THAN 5,000 VETERANS EXITED HCHV CRS PROGRAMS TO PERMANENT HOUSING



78 DAYS WAS THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IN AN HCHV CRS PROGRAM



59% OF VETERANS EXITING CRS PROGRAMS CONTINUED TO RECEIVE OUTPATIENT VA MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND 77% RECEIVED ONGOING VA MEDICAL SERVICES



120,044 VETERANS RECEIVED HCHV OUTREACH SERVICES

HCHV PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

Shreveport VA homeless program delivers camaraderie and food

The Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program at the Overton Brooks VA Medical Center in Shreveport provides more than housing and shelter to Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The people working in the HCHV program understand that hardship comes in many forms. Due to low income or loss of employment, many Veterans, especially during the pandemic, cannot afford what many take for granted — food.

“We do everything in our power to make sure our Veterans are safe. Our team makes sure that our Veterans don’t have to go without,” said Peer Support Specialist Mike Smith. “All our Veterans are low income, and many have families. The last thing we want is for any Veteran or their family to be hungry.”

For the full story of how the Overton Brooks HCHV program provides food to Shreveport Veterans and their families in need, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/78075/shreveport-va-homeless-program-delivers-camaraderie-food.



10,439 VETERANS RECEIVED HCHV CASE MANAGEMENT

Health Care Services



Homeless Patient Aligned Care Teams (HPACTs)

HPACT is an innovative treatment model that VAMCs across the country are implementing to provide a coordinated “medical home” specifically tailored to the needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness. Selected VA facilities assign Veterans to an HPACT that includes a primary care provider, a nurse, a social worker, homeless program staff, and others who provide medical and mental health care, case management, housing, and social services. This team provides and coordinates Veterans’ health care along with the services they need to obtain and stay in permanent housing. Five core elements distinguish HPACT from traditional primary care models: (1) reducing barriers to care, (2) providing one-stop, wraparound services that are integrated and coordinated, (3) engaging Veterans in intensive case management, (4) providing high-quality, evidence-based, and culturally sensitive care, and (5) being performance-based and accountable using real-time data. Veterans enrolled in HPACT experience, on average, 31% fewer emergency room visits, have an average of 24% fewer hospitalizations, receive care at almost \$10,000 less per year than a homeless Veteran enrolled in a standard PACT, and report more positive patient care experiences. For more information about HPACTs, visit va.gov/homeless/h_pact.asp.

HPACT PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

Charleston Veteran battles chronic pain, finds recovery, family

Army Veteran Darryl Gadsden suffered a debilitating back strain in the 1980s while training with a 65-pound kit during a 13-mile march. He was rushed to the hospital, where he learned that he had scoliosis that had been aggravated by the heavy load he was carrying. He was treated with morphine and given a prescription for oxycodone. That was the beginning of a long and treacherous trek with prescription painkillers. Gadsden’s dependence on them eventually led to the loss of his job as a firefighter. After years of substance abuse and homelessness, he decided to try out some VA programs he had heard about. Through group meetings and a rehabilitation program, Gadsden was able to stay sober long enough to find a better way to manage his pain. He worked with the pain management team and HPACT physician Elizabeth Call to create an effective pain management plan that didn’t involve opioids and that facilitated his recovery. For the full story of how HPACT contributed to Gadsden’s recovery and his ability to take control over his pain, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/64262/charleston-veteran-finds-recovery-family.



OVER 85 ACTIVE HPACTS WERE IN OPERATION AT 54 VHA SITES



MORE THAN 17,000 VETERANS WERE ENROLLED IN HPACT

Health Care Services

Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRC)

VA's CRRCs operate in collaboration with community-based homeless providers and federal and state partners that provide services to Veterans experiencing homelessness. CRRCs provide one-stop access to housing, physical and mental health care, job development programs, and other VA and non-VA services in a central, community-based location with the lowest possible barriers to access. There are currently 32 CRRCs in strategically selected areas across the country. For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/crrc-list.asp.



MORE THAN 67,000 VETERAN VISITS TO CRRCs

Homeless Veterans Dental Program (HVDP)

Dental care ranks as one of the top three unmet needs of Veterans who are experiencing homelessness. HVDP provides dental care to Veterans through VA programs such as Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment, GPD, CWT/TR, HCHV (contract bed), and Community Residential Care. For more information about dental care for Veterans, visit va.gov/homeless/dental.asp.



APPROXIMATELY 12,000 VETERANS SERVED

CRRC SUCCESS STORY

VA donation drive collects items for Veterans and families

VA's Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC) collected donations from August 12 through November 12 for the CRRC at the Washington DC VAMC to help Veterans in the metropolitan area who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The CRRC is the first facility of its kind in the Washington area that is open seven days a week and 24 hours a day. It serves approximately 70 Veterans per day, nearly 500 per week.

For the collection drive, the CRRC provided a wish list of items that Veterans needed most. The list included nonperishable foods, kitchen items, toiletries, personal hygiene items, men's and women's clothing, school supplies, and holiday gifts for the Veterans' children. For the full story of how the Washington CRRC and the Veterans it serves benefitted from the OALC collection drive, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/68634/va-donation-drive-collects-items-veterans-families.

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV)

Veterans who are experiencing homelessness, are at risk of homelessness, or are facing a housing crisis can reach VA 24/7 by contacting the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 1-877-4AID VET (1-877-424-3838). The hotline also takes calls from VAMC staff; federal, state, and local partners; community agencies; service providers; and others in the community who want to make referrals or get more information. For more information, visit va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp.



**RECEIVED 131,244
PHONE CALLS**



**MADE 61,630 REFERRALS TO
VAMC STAFF NATIONWIDE**

Health Care Services

Veterans Justice Programs (VJP)

Incarceration is one of the most powerful predictors of homelessness. VA's Veterans Justice Programs serve Veterans at any point in their involvement in the criminal justice system, including their reentry into the community following incarceration. The goal of VJP is to provide these Veterans with resources, services, and mental health and other clinical treatment to prevent homelessness and ensure a lasting rehabilitation. VJP staff conduct outreach in prison, jail, and court settings. They work with local law enforcement to identify and contact justice-involved Veterans and facilitate their access to VHA mental health, substance use, and homeless services and to other VA services and benefits as appropriate. For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp and va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp.



MORE THAN 42,000 JUSTICE-INVOLVED VETERANS RECEIVED SERVICES



601 VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS AND OTHER VETERAN-FOCUSED COURT PROGRAMS WERE SUPPORTED



170 PRO-BONO ON-SITE LEGAL CLINICS WERE HOSTED BY VAMCS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH LEGAL PROVIDERS

VJP SUCCESS STORY

Veterans Treatment Courts go online to support Veterans during COVID-19 pandemic

VA's Homeless Programs Office supports Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs) through the participation of its Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists. VJO Specialists assess Veteran defendants' treatment needs and link them with appropriate VA treatment services. They also provide regular updates to the court on the Veteran's progress throughout their treatment.

To continue serving Veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic, VTCs across the country moved their services online. To make it happen, VTCs and VJO Specialists throughout the country set up daily remote options for court appearances. On any given call, there could be 25 to 30 people, including the Veteran, the judge, the prosecutor, the case coordinator, and others. To read the full story of how VTCs adapted to continue providing supportive services during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/75597/veterans-treatment-courts-go-online-support-veterans-covid-19-pandemic.

Veterans Justice Programs (VJP)

Office of Community Engagement

The Office of Community Engagement serves as a trusted resource and as a catalyst for the growth of effective partnerships at the national, state, and community levels. It also serves as a facilitator and access point for public and private entities interested in partnering with HPO to enhance supportive services and resources for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Community Engagement works with VA's Office of Strategic Partnerships, the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, and a contractor to develop communication tools, partnership referrals, and strategic messaging to make Veterans who are homeless aware of services available to them. This approach also targets VA employees; national, state, and local organizations; and other interested stakeholders.



THE BENEVOLENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA HELPED 7,764 VETERANS

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America provides emergency assistance, household essentials, and other supports to Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In 2020, they helped 7,764 Veterans.



BOMBAS DONATED 36,500 PAIRS OF SOCKS TO VETERANS

Bombas donates and distributes socks to VA homeless programs every year to provide comfort and more positive health outcomes to Veterans as they work to achieve housing stability and independence. In FY 2020, Bombas donated 36,500 pairs of socks, valued at \$17,885, to VAMCs and community partners.



VETERANS CANTEEN SERVICES DONATED 2,800 MATTRESS SETS AND 1,200 MOVE-IN KITS

Veterans Canteen Service provides mattress sets and move-in kits to Veterans in VHA homeless programs. In FY 2020, they donated 2,800 mattress sets and 1,200 move-in kits.



MILITARY OUTREACH USA PROVIDED 214 BEDS, INCLUDING LINENS AND PILLOWS, AND MORE THAN 8,300 MOVE-IN ESSENTIALS TO VETERANS

Military Outreach USA is a faith-based nonprofit that collects and donates items to the three VAMCs in the Chicago area and other VAMCs across the country. An estimated 8,000 Veterans and their family members have received over 1,500 beds and over 1.1 million move-in essentials, hygiene items, and food through these donations. In 2020, this organization provided 214 beds, including linens and pillows, and more than 8,300 move-in essentials.



VETERANS MATTER HELPED 750 VETERANS

Veterans Matter provides deposit or down payment assistance to HUD-VASH Veterans. They operate in 26 states, including Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas, and have helped nearly 5,000 Veterans to date. In FY 2020, they helped 750 Veterans.

Community Programs and Services



Stand Downs

Stand Downs are one- to three-day events held by community agencies in partnership with VA to provide Veterans experiencing homelessness with essential services and support, including health screenings, VA and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other services, such as housing, employment, and substance use disorder treatment. For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/events.asp.



214 STAND DOWNS SERVED APPROXIMATELY 49,180 VETERANS

Project CHALENG (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups)

Project CHALENG brings together VA, community agencies, and other federal, state, and local government offices that provide homeless services, to assess and develop plans to meet the needs of Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. CHALENG includes two components: CHALENG meetings and the CHALENG survey, which includes the perspectives of Veterans and those of VA and community service providers. The 2019 CHALENG survey participants consisted of 2,754 Veterans experiencing homelessness and 1,864 service providers and other stakeholders. Ten percent of the Veteran participants were women. Forty-five percent of the Veteran participants were between the ages of 45 and 60, and 40% were 61 or older. The 2019 survey results revealed that Veteran needs that have been met primarily involve services that VHA can provide directly, whereas most unmet needs require community partnership support to fulfill. To find more information about the project, to see full details of the top 10 unmet needs for Veterans, and to learn the demographics of survey participants, visit va.gov/homeless/challeng.asp.

STAND DOWN SUCCESS STORY

Reno Stand Down was altered, not canceled

For 12 years, VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System in Reno conducted its annual homeless Veteran Stand Down. In 2020, planning proved challenging with the restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

VA staff and dedicated community partners were determined not to cancel this critical event, because each year, the Stand Down prepares Veterans who are experiencing homelessness for the bitter cold winter months. To keep Veterans, staff, and volunteers safe, VA coordinators strategically structured the five-day event to serve smaller groups and to meet physical distancing requirements. For the full story of how VA staff and community partners collaborated to overcome not one but two challenges that threatened to force cancellation of the Stand Down, visit blogs.va.gov/VAntage/79704/reno-homeless-veteran-stand-altered-not-canceled.

Community Programs and Services

Veterans Benefits Assistance (VBA) Outreach Program

VBA funds Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators (HVOCs), who work full time at 20 regional offices to provide access to VA benefits and information for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. VBA also has Homeless Veterans Claims Coordinators (HVCCs) in its other 36 regional offices. HVCCs label, control, and expedite the processing of claims by Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, including those involved with the criminal justice system. HVCCs also report on the prioritization of homeless claims activities. In FY 2020, VBA personnel participated in over 1,800 events to assist Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Additionally, VBA contributed to the development of a memorandum of understanding between VA and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The memorandum provides a framework by which VA can provide information and access services to BOP inmates who are Veterans as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 101(2) or who have submitted a claim to VA for a benefit for which status as a Veteran is required.



EXPEDITED 30,290 COMPENSATION CLAIMS FOR VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (AVERAGE COMPLETION TIME OF 101 DAYS)



EXPEDITED 1,882 PENSION CLAIMS FOR VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (AVERAGE COMPLETION TIME OF 59 DAYS)

Excess Property for Homeless Veterans Initiative

This program provides for the distribution of the federal government's excess personal property, including sleeping bags, hats, coats, and footwear, to Veterans experiencing homelessness. VA distributes the majority of this surplus property at Stand Downs conducted by community partners.



VA APPROVED 5,932 TOTAL CLOTHING REQUISITIONS

Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance

VA works with loan servicers to help borrowers with VA guaranteed loans from the Loan Guaranty Service avoid foreclosure.



SAVED APPROXIMATELY 119,000 BORROWERS FROM FORECLOSURE, AVOIDING OVER \$3.4 BILLION IN POTENTIAL CLAIM PAYMENTS



PROGRAM STAFF MADE OVER 689,000 CALLS TO VETERANS AND THEIR SERVICERS

Interagency Collaboration and Services



National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV)

NCHAV, established by section 713 of the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016, conducts research, model development, education, and policy analysis to promote recovery-oriented care for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Activities include assessing the effectiveness of programs; identifying and disseminating best practices to integrate into policies, programs, and services for Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness; and serving as a resource for all research and training carried out by VA and other federal and nonfederal entities with respect to Veteran homelessness.



AWARDED 5 INTRAMURAL RESEARCH GRANTS FOR STUDIES FOCUSED ON ISSUES IMPACTING VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



ORGANIZED AND SPONSORED VA'S HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT STATE OF THE ART CONFERENCE ON HOMELESSNESS AND SUICIDE



25 RESEARCH-FOCUSED EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

Including research-to-practice webinars and special presentations for various stakeholder groups across the country.



SPONSORED A SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL MEDICAL CARE ON THE THEME "MULTIMORBIDITY IN HOMELESS POPULATIONS," SLATED FOR PUBLICATION IN MARCH 2021



19 STUDIES COVERING A RANGE OF TOPICS RELATED TO VETERANS EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

Including epidemiology, employment, predictive analytics, rapid rehousing, dementia, financial literacy, and suicide.



499 STAFF MEMBERS COMPLETED OUR HOMELESS CERTIFICATE PROGRAM, WHICH WENT LIVE IN SEPTEMBER 2019

This program offers VA staff in all homeless programs (over 4,500 employees) an opportunity to obtain a certificate that demonstrates their competency in working with homeless populations.

Research



TRAINED 14 HOMELESS PROGRAM CLINICIANS IN MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING THERAPY



TRAINED 28 HOMELESS PROGRAM STAFF IN COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



PROVIDED 12 NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL WEBINARS THAT WERE ATTENDED BY OVER 7,000 PARTICIPANTS

Topics included Ethics, Working With Veterans Required To Register as Sexual Offenders, Behavior Management, Opioids in Rural America, Traumatic Stress and Organizational Dynamics, Race and Homelessness: Principles of Leadership in the Community, Evidence-Based Practices, Money Management for Veterans, Whole Health Approaches, and Military Culture.



PROVIDED FIELD STAFF WITH TOOLKIT-BASED TRAINING MATERIALS THROUGH THE GERIATRICS SCHOLARS PROGRAM



ESTABLISHED THE ADVANCED CLINICAL PRACTICE SUBCOMMITTEE

This subcommittee will be responsible for reviewing current best practices, practice-informed services for programs, and evidence-based practices for possible implementation in the next fiscal year.



DEVELOPED A NEW CASE-BASED TRAINING MODULE ON ISSUES FACING OLDER VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR ULTIMATE INCLUSION IN THE GERIATRIC SCHOLARS TRAINING PROGRAM

Collaborated with the Geriatrics and Extended Care program and the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention to develop the module.



COORDINATED WITH THE GERIATRICS SCHOLARS PROGRAM TO OFFER ONLINE CERTIFIED TRAINING IN GERIATRICS THROUGH MT. SINAI UNIVERSITY AT A REDUCED COST TO VA PROVIDERS



RECORDED AND PRODUCED, IN COLLABORATION WITH VA'S EMPLOYEE EDUCATION SYSTEM, A SERIES OF SELF-HELP PODCASTS FOCUSED ON COVID-19, WITH OVER 3,500 DOWNLOADS TO DATE



DEVELOPED A PUBLIC-FACING WEBSITE FOCUSED ON COVID-19 AND HOMELESSNESS



DEVELOPED AN ONLINE RESOURCE CENTER ON ISSUES RELATED TO HOMELESSNESS

Research



Despite the many challenges faced during fiscal year 2020, HPO continued to work tirelessly to ensure that all Veterans and their families have a safe, stable place to call home and access to essential services to promote healthy lives. The steady increase in the number of communities effectively ending homelessness among Veterans is proof that preventing and ending homelessness for all Veterans is achievable.

Throughout FY 2020, HPO's collaborations with interagency offices and external stakeholders brought to light many promising practices and significantly contributed to VA's ability to move the needle toward preventing and ending homelessness among Veterans, even in the midst of a pandemic. These strategic partnerships remain essential, because there are critical needs and gaps in services that VA legally cannot fulfill. Furthermore, the CARES Act funding allocated to the SSVF, GPD, and HCHV programs allowed HPO to provide Veterans and their families with emergency housing, homelessness prevention assistance, and other supportive services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As this report shows, each HPO program demonstrated its commitment to preventing and ending Veteran homelessness by delivering high-quality services while also addressing COVID-19-related guidelines, policies, and practices.

Conclusion

