

MARCH 2022

***The Homeless Programs Office (HPO) newsletter contains news and information about VA's ongoing effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.***



## Executive Director's Message | Around HPO

## COVID-19 Response | Staff Spotlight | Fact of the Month

**Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness** are strongly encouraged to contact the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.

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## Message From Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office



About 1 mile from VA's Central Office, our Washington, D.C. colleagues may have noticed a new kind of tourist in the Capitol this month. The cohort is not visiting the National Mall to learn about history, but rather to make history. As the largest assembly of women statues ever, these 3-D printed sculptures honor the monumental contributions of 120 real-world American [women in STEM](#).

Installed to honor Women's History Month as part of the [Smithsonian's Women's Futures Month](#), these statues are not just unique due to their vibrant orange color—they also remind us that only about 400 (less than 10%) of historical sculptures in our nation honor women. Yet throughout our country's history, women have been on the front lines of each challenge and triumph, including as part of our military. Their

successes may not be carved in stone at the same rate as their male counterparts, but we need not look far to learn about their heroic service to this country.

Every day, I see incredible additions to women's history, both by the colleagues I have the privilege of working alongside and by the Veterans we have the pleasure of serving. Stories from Veterans like the many women leaders featured in the [75 Years at VHA series](#) are living tributes that the work we are doing matters, and the strength of our women Veterans is unparalleled.

[Read Monica's full message.](#)

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## Around HPO

### [Social Work Month](#)

Social Work Month 2022



THE TIME IS RIGHT  
FOR SOCIAL WORK

The Time is Right to celebrate the important role of social workers in ending Veteran homelessness!

This month, we will be sharing stories from some of the outstanding social workers in our programs who play an essential role in ending Veteran homelessness. Keep an eye out for new features each week [here](#).



### [Veterans Coffee Socials](#)

Building social support systems with Veterans in the community is an important part of ensuring Veterans' overall health – which is where [Veterans Coffee Socials](#) come in. These events enhance communication and foster bonds among Veterans and others in the community.

Learn about [how these events began](#), and find information on [starting a community-based social event](#) with Veterans in your area.

### [Health Care for Homeless Veterans \(HCHV\) Handbook Directives](#)

The HCHV National Office has been working to convert HCHV Handbook 1162.09 into 3 separate directives:



- [HCHV Outreach Services](#)
- [HCHV Contract Residential Services/Low Demand Safe Haven](#)
- HCHV Community Resource & Referral Centers

Two of these directives are now published and available for staff and supervisors to review and can be found at the links above. We will continue to keep you updated on the progress of the final pending [HCHV directive](#).



## Training on Advances in Virtual Care

The EXPLORATION-INNOVATION-TECHNOLOGY (E.I.T.) Forum, sponsored by the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans and the VHA Innovation Ecosystem, is offering a live webinar on [Virtual Care in Times of Rapid Change and Uncertainty: What are the Takeaways?](#) on Tuesday, March 29 from 1:00-2:00 pm ET.

This webinar will offer reflections on the themes discussed in previous webinars, such as integrating digital health modalities into care, addressing access challenges and health equity issues, and using virtual tools to expand pathways to care.

CEUs are available. VA staff can register online [here](#), or simply join the meeting online [here](#). Individuals outside of VA may register through [VHA TRAIN](#).

## National Nutrition Month

March is National Nutrition Month, which brings the issue of food insecurity for Veterans to the forefront of our minds. While VA offers a number of [nutrition and food services for Veterans](#), those in need must be reached in order to be helped.



In response to this ongoing issue, VA [improved its screening tools](#) to ensure all Veterans seen at VA medical centers are regularly screened for both food insecurity and homelessness.

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## HPO COVID-19 Response and Updates

I GOT THE VACCINE

because I lost both my parents within a week of each other to COVID-19.

Craig V.  
U.S. Navy, 7 Years of Service



COVID-19 vaccines are effective at protecting people from getting seriously ill, getting hospitalized, and even dying – so it's crucial that those who are eligible stay up to date on their vaccines. The current CDC guidance recommends that everyone 5 years and older get their primary series of COVID-19 vaccines and receive a booster dose when eligible.

For more information on the CDC recommendations, [click here](#). To learn how you can get your COVID-19 vaccine through VA, [click here](#).

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## HPO Staff Spotlight: Matthew McGahran, LCSW

Matthew McGahran serves as the Chief of all VA homeless programs in Greater Los Angeles, including five surrounding counties. With such a high number of homeless Veterans in Los Angeles – approximately 10% of all Veterans

experiencing homelessness living here – it's no easy feat. Even with the wide range of programs offered, there are gaps that McGahran and his workforce of 450 are urgently working to fill.

McGahran takes the job seriously, saying, "This is the most vulnerable group of Veterans. The most vulnerable of our neighbors. Because of their time in the military, they may have injuries that lead to homelessness. And we have a responsibility to take care of them."



[Read more about McGahran's experience](#) working for VA for nearly 18 years, and the incredible service he has been able to provide.

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## HPO Fact of the Month



Did you know social workers have been a part of VA since 1926? The first-year staffing consisted of 14 social workers who were placed in psychiatric hospitals and 22 placed in regional offices throughout the country.

From this modest beginning, social work has evolved into a professional service with treatment responsibilities in all patient care areas, helping Veterans, their families, and caregivers to achieve their highest level of adjustment in society, promoting vocational and psychosocial rehabilitation.

Social work is now woven into the fabric of VA health care, providing clinical interventions and services across the VA continuum of care. During Social Work Month, [learn more about what social workers provide through VA](#).