Message from Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office

In this final install of the HPO Fact of the Month, we recognize the achievements of Black Veterans in the military. Did you know...

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1. The Winterhaven Homeless Veterans Stand Down was a huge success, with thousands of Veterans receiving assistance. This year, the event is expanding to include a “Lite” Stand Down for those who cannot make it to the main event.

2. Congress has approved the allocation of additional funds for the HUD-VASH program, which provides permanent supportive housing and case management services for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

3. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has released a new tool for service providers to quickly and easily register for the COVID-19 vaccine. This tool, known as the Vaccine Registration System, is designed to make it easier for people to find a vaccine provider and schedule an appointment.

4. A new study has found that Black Veterans are more likely to be diagnosed with mental health conditions than White Veterans. This highlights the need for continued efforts to improve care for this population.

COVID-19 Response and Updates

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, new challenges have emerged for our Veteran communities. Here are some of the latest updates:

1. The COVID-19 vaccine is now available to all eligible Veterans, regardless of their VA enrollment status. To learn more, visit the VA COVID-19 Vaccine website.

2. HUD has released guidance on how service providers can best support Veterans who are experiencing homelessness and are dealing with the pandemic. This includes providing resources and support for those who need it most.

3. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have partnered to provide additional funding to support the COVID-19 Response and Updates.

Veteran Success Stories

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In November 2018, Albert Garcia, a Veteran, was homeless and struggling with addiction. He reached out to the HPO COVID-19 Response program for help, and was able to receive the services he needed to turn his life around.

Special Edition: Remembering Secretary Jesse Brown—His Legacy of Advocacy

This February, while the nation celebrates Black History Month, we take a moment to remember Secretary Jesse Brown, a decorated disabled Vietnam Veteran who in 1993 became the first African American Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Secretary Brown, who wanted to ensure equitable service delivery to every Veteran we serve. Unfortunately, Black Veterans are overrepresented among the homeless Veteran population, constituting 33% of Veterans experiencing homelessness. To learn more about what the HPO Racial Equity Workgroup is doing, we interviewed several Workgroup members. They collaborated and devised a safe way to help homeless and at-risk Veterans.

Every day, HPO conducts coordinated outreach to find those Veterans most in need of assistance; connects Veterans who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness to resources; and collaborates with housing providers, nonprofits, and federal, state, and local governments to ensure equitable service delivery to every Veteran we serve. Among these exceptional individuals is Jesse Brown, a disabled Marine

HPO Fact of the Month

As the COVID-19 vaccine is becoming accessible to those experiencing homelessness, only Veterans who do not have access to a phone are to visit the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance. To minimize the risk of contracting COVID-19 or spreading COVID-19, only Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans.

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