

VHA Homeless Programs Office

Working Together to Help Veterans Exit Homelessness

JULY 2020

Program highlights



VJO Specialists work in 561 VTCs and other Veteran-focused courts, and the VJO workforce continues to grow to help support the increasing number of VTCs and other Veteran-focused criminal justice programs.

Congress passes bill to provide additional funds to veterans treatment courts

In 2007, an associate judge in the Buffalo City Court approached leaders of the Buffalo, NY VA Medical Center with a proposal to work together to identify justice-involved Veterans and address their unmet clinical needs. A year later, in 2008, the first Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) was established in Buffalo, followed by the creation of VA's [Veterans Justice Outreach](#) (VJO) program in 2009. Today, there are 561 VTCs and other Veteran-focused courts across America and VJO personnel at every VA medical center.

This holistic approach to rehabilitation leverages VA case management services, Veteran camaraderie, regular court appearances, and mandatory attendance at treatment sessions—when applicable—to ensure Veterans have the necessary tools to reintegrate back into their families and communities successfully during and after completing their supervision by the criminal justice system.

Although VA does not provide funding directly to VTCs, VA supports VTCs through the participation of its VJO specialists as members of VTC treatment teams and through the health care services it provides to many Veteran participants. VJO Specialists work in 561 VTCs and other Veteran-focused courts, and the VJO workforce continues to grow to help support the increasing number of VTCs and other Veteran-focused criminal justice programs that communities are adopting. Since FY 2018, VA has added more than 100 VJO specialist positions at VA medical centers.

Since their inception, VTCs have produced positive outcomes for justice-involved Veterans. Moreover, Veterans have responded favorably to this specialized, structured program. Now, this model is one presidential signature away from an added boost from the U.S. Department of Justice. This month, the Veteran Treatment Court Coordination Act of 2019 (HR 886), which already passed through the House of Representatives and Senate, has been moved to the President's desk to be signed into law. This legislation creates a program through the Department of Justice that would provide funding and technical assistance to state, local, and tribal governments that have existing VTCs or are interested in starting one in their community.

Program updates



Navy Veteran and Hawaii native Rodney Navarro

Veteran rebuilt life with assistance from Supportive Services for Veteran Families

In 2018, Navy Veteran and Hawaii native Rodney Navarro received an ultimatum: travel to Oregon to enter the White City Veterans Rehabilitation Center for substance abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder, or remain incarcerated at the Maui Community Correctional Center.

Navarro chose to go to Oregon.

Nine months later, Navarro was excelling in the program and meeting all his personal goals while remaining sober. His counselors encouraged him to apply for housing assistance from the nonprofit organization [Access](#). Based in Medford, Oregon, the nonprofit provides supportive services to low-income Veterans living in or transitioning to permanent housing thanks to grants from [VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\)](#) program. [Read full story.](#)

VA partner selected as finalist for prestigious award

VA is proud to partner with nonprofit [Community Solutions](#) on our shared goal of preventing and ending homelessness across the nation. They've been selected as a finalist for the MacArthur Foundation 100&Change award. [Read more.](#)

Interview with FOX59 (WXIN-TV)- Helping our nation's homeless veterans

U.S. Veterans are facing an increased risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. FOX59 (WXIN-TV) of Indianapolis, Indiana spoke with Dr. Keith Harris, National Director of Clinical Operations for the VA's homeless program. He explained how those Veterans are receiving more help. [Watch the interview.](#)

More information

VA expands funding for emergency response for Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness during COVID-19 pandemic

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is allocating an additional \$400 million of its [coronavirus relief funding](#) to enhance the department's emergency relief response for Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) allocated \$17.2 billion for the Veterans Health Administration of which \$700 million is devoted to expanding services for and addressing the challenges faced by Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. [Read more.](#)

BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month

This Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Mental Health Awareness Month, we salute VA's [minority Veterans programs coordinators](#) (MVPCs) for the vital roles they play in helping Veterans access VA homeless programs and other VA resources. Activated in 1995, MVPCs work to expand awareness of the unique experiences of, and challenges faced by minority Veterans. MVPCs also work closely with each VA business line to increase minority Veterans' participation in VA programs for which they are eligible, including [VHA homeless programs](#). There is a MVPC in each regional office, medical center, and national cemetery to educate and assist all Veterans, including Veterans who are not minorities, in determining eligibility for VA benefits and services.

Communicate with us

We value your feedback about the work underway to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans. Please share your comments by clicking the blue "Contact Homeless Outreach" button on the [VHA Homeless Programs website](#).