

VHA Homeless Programs Office

Working Together to Help Veterans Exit Homelessness

SEPTEMBER 2020

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



September is Suicide Prevention Month, an important time to highlight available resources for Veterans in distress. Homelessness is a primary risk factor for suicide among Veterans. Veterans within 30 days of eviction or the onset of homelessness are at elevated risk of suicide. The VA [Homeless Programs Office](#) (HPO) works to ensure that Veterans have access to the resources they need to become or remain stably housed.

Recently, the [VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#) (OMHSP) awarded \$1.3 million to HPO's [Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\) Program](#) to increase suicide prevention services for Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The

funding allows the SSVF program to provide supportive services, including rapid rehousing and homelessness prevention services, to Veterans who are identified as having an elevated risk of suicide.

In addition to its work with OMHSP, HPO also works closely with [Community Solutions](#) – a non-profit that collaborates with federal, state, local and philanthropic organizations to prevent and end homelessness among all subpopulations, including Veterans.

The organization's [Built for Zero initiative](#) helps localities collect real-time data on homelessness, tracks progress against monthly goals, and encourages communities to adopt promising practices. These evidence-based activities help communities secure the housing resources needed to stably house homeless Veterans, which in turn reduces suicide risk.

Suicide prevention is a year-round effort, which [VA](#) is committed to tackling on all fronts – including homeless prevention. I encourage everyone to check on their friends, neighbors and loved ones. People in distress often display warning signs, such as hopelessness, engaging in risky activities or withdrawing from family and friends. To learn more about the warning signs of suicide risk and how to help a Veteran in distress, watch VA and PsychArmor's [S.A.V.E. training video](#).

Remember that you are not alone. If you or someone you know is in distress, please call [the Veterans Crisis Line](#) at 1-800-273-8255.

Program updates



Army Veteran, Laddie McMillian

Veteran finds dream home through HUD-VASH voucher

In 2017, Army Veteran Laddie McMillian faced declining health and housing instability. He entered the Veterans Restoration Quarters after losing his home, then later obtained housing with the assistance of the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing](#) (HUD-VASH) program.

Through VA's collaboration with HUD, eligible Veterans receive HUD-VASH vouchers to make market rate housing affordable. They also receive wraparound supportive services, such as case management, financial literacy training, healthcare and other types of assistance from VA. [Read more.](#)

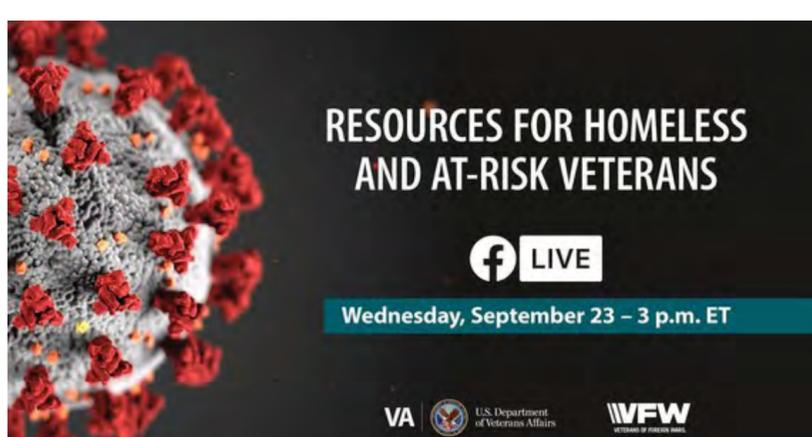
VA awards \$1.3 million to support Veterans at elevated risk of suicide from experiencing or being at risk of homelessness

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced, on September 14, 2020, it recently awarded \$1.3 million in grants to 11 regional homelessness nonprofit organizations to bolster suicide prevention services for Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. [Read more.](#)

VA to award more than \$400 million in grants to end Veteran homelessness

On Friday August 7, 2020, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it will begin awarding more than \$400 million in grants under the [Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program](#) (SSVF) to 266 non-profit organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands on October 1 of this year. [Read the full news release.](#)

Events



VFW-VA Facebook Live Event: Resources for Homeless and At-Risk Veterans

All Veterans deserve a place to call home. If you or a Veteran you know is facing homelessness, VA can provide needed support services.

On September 23 at 3 p.m. ET, VA and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) hosted a Facebook Live event to discuss how Veterans and their family members can access expanded support during the COVID-19 pandemic, made available by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. [Watch the event.](#)

Stand Downs

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking the necessary steps to ensure we keep Veterans safe as we continue the vital work of reaching out to and caring for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. To address the urgent needs of Veterans facing a housing crisis, VA medical centers (VAMCs) partner with local organizations to host Stand Downs to provide Veterans with health screenings; food; clothing and help accessing housing, wraparound supportive services and VA and mainstream benefits such as Social Security.

Due to COVID-19, Stand Down events in some locations may have been canceled or postponed until further notice. Some Stand Downs may still occur, with organizers adding extra precautions to protect Veterans, their families and VA staff from contracting or spreading COVID-19. Thus, we encourage Veterans and volunteers to check with the local VAMC or event point of contact (POC) before attending.

Below are October Stand Downs through October 3, 2020:

- October 1-3, 2020 – Ferndale, CA
- October 2, 2020 – Athens, OH
- October 3, 2020 – Elkhart, IN
- October 3, 2020 – Guadalupe, AZ
- October 3, 2020 – Pendleton, OR
- October 3, 2020 – Racine, WI

For more information, including Stand Down POCs and a complete list of upcoming Stand Downs, check [this page](#).

HPO Fact of the Month

Did you know?

There is no single cause of suicide. It is often the result of a complex interaction of multiple factors at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels. To prevent Veteran suicide, we must maximize protective factors and minimize risk factors at all these levels. [More information.](#)

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](#).