

NETWORK HOMELESS COORDINATOR

WHAT IS A NETWORK HOMELESS COORDINATOR (NHC)?

A Network Homeless Coordinator (NHC) is a subject matter expert on Veteran homelessness and the programs, practices, and policies that guide the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in a Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN).

Subject matter expert on Veteran homelessness:

- A professional with a graduate degree, typically in one of the following disciplines: social work, psychology, nursing, or psychiatry.
- Has extensive experience and expertise in the provision of services to homeless Veterans, including coordination and management of programs. For example, a Master's degree level social worker who has worked with homeless Veterans and managed a complex homeless Veterans program at the VA medical center facility level for five (5) years, including all major services that VA offers specifically for homeless Veterans.

Subject matter expert on homeless programs, practices, and policies:

- Attends to the efficiency of homeless programs through data-informed allocation and coordination of program resources across VA medical center facilities in the VISN.
- Ensures the effectiveness of programs and resources by utilizing program performance metrics and descriptive measures to identify best practices and improve program outcomes for homeless Veterans.
- Fosters stakeholder satisfaction by cultivating a wide range of partnerships with internal and external groups, including homeless and formerly homeless Veterans.
- Promotes Veteran-centric care by holding staff at the VA medical center-level responsible and accountable for the consistent delivery of high quality homeless-specific program services.
- Trains staff in conjunction with all other VHA resources to provide the appropriate and relevant services as described in VHA directives, memorandums, and other guidance documents.
- Works collaboratively with facility, VISN, and National Homeless Program Office leadership to implement VHA policy across medical centers through education, consultation, and problem solving.

WHERE DO YOU FIND A NETWORK HOMELESS COORDINATOR?

It is often the case that the NHC is located at the VISN headquarters, where the Network Director is based. The NHC may be virtual to this location but still works for this unit in VHA. The NHC may be based at a VA medical center (VAMC) in the network.

WITH WHOM DOES THE NETWORK HOMELESS COORDINATOR COMMUNICATE AT THE VAMC?

The NHC typically facilitates one or more virtual meetings or conference calls, at least monthly, with the Homeless Programs supervisors at the VAMCs within their network/VISN. These business calls have the following objectives:

- Communicate national messages that involve or impact the local, VAMC-level homeless programs;
- Monitor staffing, progress, and operational barriers of programs through site reports;
- Survey and answer questions or issues posed by the field;
- Provide VISN-level direction to facilities on program operations.

The NHC may also communicate with medical center senior leadership about patient or program issues that are urgent or could generate investigative, media, or Congressional interest.

WHEN AND WHY DO THE NETWORK HOMELESS COORDINATORS VISIT THE VAMC?

The NHCs visit programs and communities in their networks. The frequency of these visits depends on the size of the VISN and the issues of the day. The purpose of these site visits may also vary. NHCs have responsibilities to conduct scheduled and unscheduled program inspections as required by VHA handbooks, directives, and memorandums. NHCs are sometimes requested by facility-level leadership to evaluate program challenges or other difficult situations and develop problem-focused recommendations or solutions to ensure program integrity.

To effectively execute their role, NHCs need to have a command of the strengths, challenges and deficits at a site. A visit may simply be to update the understanding the NHC has about the current functioning of a site. Based on that understanding, the NHC may identify additional partnership opportunities with the local medical center and stakeholders such as the VHA Homeless Program Office, local service providers, and government and non-government leaders to better prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.