

Grant & Per Diem Program Provider Call

Updates and Implications: The Federal Criteria & Benchmarks April 24, 2017

Today's Presenters

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VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Attendees (1)

Active Speakers

Hosts (1)

Jeffery Quarles

Presenters (0)

Participants (0)

Chat (Everyone)

Everyone

Sharing

Discussion

Collabo...

Purpose of Today's Call

1. Provide a basic overview of the Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for ending Veteran Homelessness
2. Familiarize GPD providers with the key changes made to the Federal Criteria and Benchmarks in Feb 2017
3. Highlight where the Federal goals are most relevant to the Grant & Per Diem Program

The Federal Criteria and Benchmarks & the Grant & Per Diem / VA Program(s)

- Ending homelessness is a community-wide effort, including the Continuum of Care, VA programs/VAMC, and other stakeholders
- Grant & Per Diem represents the most significant transitional housing stock for Veterans nationally
- Federal goals require GPD and other TH to assess role in ending homelessness and shift where necessary
- GPD NOFA and future changes begin to reflect the vision for GPD as a community partner in local efforts to effectively end homelessness among Veterans
- Communities cannot meet the Federal Goals without coordination with GPD partners and stakeholders
- The GPD Program Office expects providers to be active participants in local efforts to end homelessness as described by the Federal Partners

The Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness

- Determined by federal partners (USICH, VA, HUD)
- For communities participating in *Mayor's Challenge* or that otherwise want *federal recognition*
- Distinct from “Functional Zero” definition
- Represent a minimum standard to measure within a defined period, but goal is ongoing assessment and improvement even once confirmed
- May be periodically updated (newest version February 2017)
- New version consolidates various guidance documents into one package

What does it mean to end homelessness?

An end to homelessness **does not mean that no one will ever experience a housing crisis again.** An end to homelessness means that every community will have a **systematic response in place** that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or is **otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.**

Operational Definition of an End to Homelessness

Specifically, every community will have the capacity to:

- **Quickly identify** and **engage** people at-risk of and experiencing homelessness.
- Intervene to **prevent** the loss of housing and **divert** people from entering the homelessness services system.
- Provide immediate **access to shelter and crisis services**, without barriers to entry, while permanent stable housing and appropriate supports are being secured.
- When homelessness does occur, **quickly connect people to housing** assistance and services—tailored to their unique needs, strengths and desires—to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.

NOFA: Refining GPD Opportunities

- ✓ All program types designed to facilitate movement toward permanent housing as quickly as possible and desired
- ✓ Models are NOT phases
- ✓ Challenge GPD providers to critically review role in community
- ✓ Program design and intake should be informed by community needs
- ✓ Expectation for strong, coordinated partnerships with CoC, SSVF, local VA Medical Center and other stakeholders
- ✓ Allow for flexibility to better meet the needs and desires of the Veteran being served
- ✓ Changing the way we do business to leverage what we know works (Housing First, Coordinated Entry, Strong Community Planning)

Offer of Permanent Housing Intervention Overview

An offer of an intervention (housing assistance and services where necessary) in which the intervention is available at the time the offer is made:

- The offer of housing intervention offered must be immediately available (ex: enrollment to SSVF, issuance of Voucher)
- Does not require that the actual housing unit is identified
- Placement on waiting lists or general referrals not sufficient. Must be a direct offer of actual housing resources
- All Veterans must be offered PH before referral/enrollment to TH.
- The type (Bridge, Service Intensive, etc) of TH Veteran enters is determined by Veteran choice after the offer, not the GPD bed type.

Offer of Permanent Housing Intervention

Examples

What is an Offer of Permanent Housing Intervention?

- ✓ Veteran offered SSVF and is immediately connected to the SSVF provider, who then quickly enrolls for services and housing search
- ✓ Veteran qualifies for HUD-VASH and Voucher is issued immediately upon submission of paperwork
- ✓ Veteran is not VA eligible, but qualifies for CoC Tenant Based Rental Assistance and is connected to enrollment specialist for currently open housing slot

What is **NOT** an Offer of Permanent Housing Intervention?

- ⊘ Veteran is provided a phone number to call to ask for assistance
- ⊘ Veteran is placed on a HUD-VASH waiting list but no voucher is immediately available
- ⊘ Veteran is referred to SSVF but SSVF does not have capacity for new cases at this time

Types of Transitional Housing

BRIDGE HOUSING

- ✓ Veteran has been offered and **accepted** a permanent housing intervention **prior** to entering GPD
- ✓ Veteran desires quick movement to Permanent Housing
- ✓ Veteran is not able to immediately enter the permanent housing unit
- ✓ Generally provided for up to 90 days
- ✓ Individual housing unit does not need to be secured
- ✓ Veterans within such programs or beds are included within calculations of all the benchmarks
- ✓ Term “Bridge” based on the **decision of the Veteran**, not the “type” of bed funded by GPD

Types of Transitional Housing

BRIDGE HOUSING – Clarification!

The definition of Bridge Housing in the Federal Criteria and Benchmarks is a slightly different than GPD Bridge Housing NOFA definition:

- Federal Criteria and Benchmarks require housing offer to be made and accepted PRIOR to entry into GPD to be considered Bridge
- GPD Bridge NOFA allows for the housing acceptance to be logged in HOMES up to 14 days after admission into the program.

However, the central expectation is the same – Veterans are offered PH first and Bridge Housing is used when that offer is accepted and used for short-term stay while the Veteran is working toward quick access to an actual housing unit

Types of Transitional Housing

SERVICE INTENSIVE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING (SITH)

- ✓ Veterans who have **been offered** an available permanent housing intervention but have **declined** and instead chosen to enter transitional housing
- ✓ Veterans are **actively working to achieve permanent housing** while they engage in clinically appropriate or other transitional housing services, such as generalized case management or job training services.
- ✓ Veterans in SITH able to move into permanent housing at any time and should be supported in quickly moving into permanent housing

Important: Federal Goals say that Veterans who choose to enter service-intensive transitional housing “are provided with ongoing opportunities to express a preference for, to request, and to access a permanent housing intervention instead, through an **at-least monthly review of their individualized service and housing plans and their desired outcomes for services and housing.**”

Types of Transitional Housing

SITH ADDRESSING A CLINICAL NEED

- ✓ A subset of service-intensive transitional housing in which Veterans are receiving targeted treatment and services for **specific clinical needs**, such as treatment and services for homeless Veterans with substance use disorders or other mental health disorders, Safe Haven-like services for chronically homeless Veterans, or recuperative care for homeless Veterans post hospitalization.
- ✓ Veterans who have been offered an available permanent housing intervention but have declined and instead chosen to enter a transitional housing program in order to appropriately address a clinical need are exempted from both Benchmarks A (chronic/long-term) and B (90 day average time to housing placement).

Types of Transitional Housing TH ADDRESSING A CLINICAL NEED

Whether a Veteran enters SITH to address a clinical need is based on an actual, diagnosed clinical need AND the program's services specifically designed to address that need. This means the funded model does NOT necessarily equate to whether a Veteran fits this category:

- ❖ Bridge Housing – By definition, Veteran has accepted PH so not considered SITH serving a clinical need
- ❖ Low-Demand – Likely enter for specific clinical need but not assumed
- ❖ Hospital to Housing – May enter for a specific clinical need but not assumed
- ❖ Clinical Treatment – Likely entering to address clinical need based on program requirements/targeting
- ❖ Service Intensive Transitional Housing – May in some circumstances, but not all, be entering to address clinical need

Federal Criteria for Ending Veteran Homelessness

1. The community has identified all veterans experiencing homelessness.
2. The community provides shelter immediately to any veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it.
3. The community provides **service-intensive transitional housing** only in limited instances.
4. The community has capacity to assist veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing.
5. The community has resources, plans, and system capacity in place should any veteran become homeless or be at risk of homelessness in the future.

Federal Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness

- A. Chronic and **long-term** homelessness among veterans has been ended (with few exceptions, including those who choose GPD to address clinical need)
- B. Veterans have quick access to permanent housing (90 days or less on average, with few exemptions including those who choose Transitional Housing/GPD after declining PH)
- C. The community has sufficient permanent housing capacity
- D. The community is committed to housing first and provides service-intensive transitional housing to veterans experiencing homelessness only in **limited** instances.

Long-Term Homeless New Definition

Long-Term Homeless: Veterans who meet length of homeless requirement to qualify as chronically homeless, but:

- The Veteran does not have a qualifying disability
- The calculation of 12 months of homelessness includes time spent in Transitional Housing. This means Veteran can become long-term homeless while in TH

Benchmark A: Implications for GPD

Benchmark: Chronic and long-term homelessness among Veterans has been ended.

New specification that only those **chronic or long term** homeless Veterans who choose SITH to **address an identified clinical** need are exempt from Benchmark A.

- Long Term/Chronic Veterans who enter for general case management services (even if after PH offer declined) no longer exempt from Benchmark A
- Communities must end chronic AND Long-Term Homelessness
- Veterans **age-into long term** homelessness while in TH unless housed before timeline triggers designation
- Re-emphasizes need to expedite PH placements from TH for those who do not have a clinical need and do not express a desire for clinical services
- Emphasizes need to ensure no Veterans are unnecessarily homeless, including in Transitional Housing, for long periods of time, regardless of disability status

Benchmark B: Implications for GPD

Benchmark: Veterans have quick access to permanent housing. Average time from identification to permanent housing placement is 90 days or less.

- Veterans offered permanent housing but decline and instead choose to enter GPD are exempt from this benchmark, meaning their time homeless does not contribute to 90 day average
- Veterans may choose to pursue PH at any time while in GPD, even if declined PH initially
- GPD should be discussing PH options with Veterans at least monthly while enrolled

Benchmark D: Implications for GPD

Benchmark: The community is committed to Housing First and provides service-intensive transitional housing to Veterans experiencing homelessness only in limited instances.

Number of Veterans experiencing homelessness who enter service-intensive transitional housing is **significantly less** than the number of Veterans entering homelessness.

- Previous version required Veterans entering SITH to be less than the number of Veterans becoming homeless, but only required a difference of one (1)
- Now, **Federal Partners will have discretion** in determining Benchmark success based on broader system data and localized conditions.
- Focus on reducing the number of Veterans entering SITH as related to number entering the homeless system.

GPD Program Operations and the Federal Goals

- Assurance that **ALL** Veterans offered permanent housing intervention prior to GPD referral or enrollment
- At **least monthly**, permanent housing plan discussions while in GPD
- Use of a Master List and Case Conferencing to **expedite housing opportunities** and ensure coordination
- **Lowering barriers** to entry and responsive case planning (termination only in most extreme cases)
- **Housing First** System Approach – Focus is always on the permanent housing plan even for those who choose GPD
- Veteran-Centric services based on **choice** and needs
- Integrated referral and access partnerships (**Coordinated Entry, Housing Navigators, Community Linkages**)

Other Noteworthy Highlights of Clarifications

- Heavy emphasis on **exemptions/exceptions being rare**. Don't try to find ways to exempt Veterans – find ways to house them quickly!
- Sets expectation that communities engage in **ongoing review, evaluation and improvement** efforts even once confirmed by Federal Partners – A milestone, not an end goal.
- Notes that Federal Review looks at entire system and other data points specific to the community. **Community may meet Benchmarks and not be confirmed** if the system in place doesn't seem truly adequate to meet the Federal vision.
- Emphasizes that “housing offers”, and Veteran decisions based on those offers, should be **documented through a transparent, coordinated process**.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

Project Level

- Lower the entry and service barriers of your individual project
- Find ways to be more accessible to Veterans with unique needs
- Offer training related to Housing First, Motivational Interviewing and other promising practices
- Review program guides, rules and other documents to align with evolving program focus

System Level

- Join local Veteran leadership team or committee – be active
- Work with your community's Coordinated Entry
- Review intake policies and ways community can ensure housing offers made prior
- Report back to community partners on GPD outcomes, target populations, bed composition
- Contribute to and use the local By Name/Master List and Case Conferencing
- Re-orient to a housing first, Veteran choice frameworks

REMEMBER....

- ❖ You are part of the solution – a critical asset in this work
- ❖ You are part of the community – its your collective work
- ❖ These changes are not done TO you, but WITH you
- ❖ It is all of our responsivity to enact change for the good of the Veterans we serve



QUESTIONS?