

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## Fact Sheet

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### Homeless Women Veterans

This fact sheet is designed to highlight services available to women Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This is complementary to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Programs for Homeless Veterans Homeless Fact Sheet.

VA remains committed to the goal of ending Veteran homelessness. VA and our Federal, state and local and non-governmental partners recognize that ending Veteran homelessness is not a single event in time, but rather is a deliberate effort towards achieving the goal, and then continued follow-on efforts to make sure that the goal is maintained.

Our goal is a systematic end to homelessness, which means communities across the country:

- Have identified all Veterans experiencing homelessness.
- Are able to provide shelter immediately to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it.
- Provide service intensive transitional housing in limited instances.
- Have capacity to assist Veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing.
- Have resources, plans and system capacity in place should any Veteran become homeless or be at risk of homelessness in the future.

The ultimate goal is that all Veterans have permanent, sustainable housing with access to high quality health care and other supportive services and that homelessness in the future is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.

Homeless women Veterans are found in communities across the country. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2015 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress, women make up approximately 9 percent of homeless Veterans. Since 2010, over 360,000 Veterans and their family members have been permanently housed, rapidly rehoused, or prevented from falling into homelessness by HUD's targeted housing vouchers and VA's homelessness programs. Our ability to partner with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), other Federal agencies, state and local governments, and volunteer organizations contributed to this significant accomplishment.

Women Veterans can face many challenges when returning to civilian life, including raising children on their own, dealing with the psychological after effects of events such as military or sexual trauma, employment barriers, and housing barriers. Communities

across the nation are continuing to align resources to address these unique challenges. Women Veterans are talented, strong, resilient, and looking for a chance to continue their service to country, community, and family as civilians. The following VA services are available to women Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

### **Screening with rapid referral to appropriate VA services**

- VA's **Homelessness Screening Clinical Reminder (HSCR)** is a tool used by clinicians to assess and identify Veterans receiving VA care who could be homeless or at imminent risk for homelessness. This screening tool has helped identify Veterans who might not otherwise seek assistance or who may not be aware of homeless programs offered by VHA and connect them with appropriate services.

#### **Program Highlights:**

- In FY 2015, over 3.5 million Veterans were screened utilizing the HSCR. The total number of women Veterans screened was 265,210 representing 7.5 percent of the total number of Veterans screened.
- Among the 23,103 Veterans that screened positive for homeless, 9.8 percent were women (2,266).
- Among the 20,230 Veterans at imminent risk for becoming homeless, 11.8 percent were women (2,392).

### **Prevention and Rapid Re-housing**

The most efficient way to eliminate homelessness is to prevent its occurrence. VA's homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing efforts address the needs of those Veterans and their families who are at immediate risk for becoming homeless or have recently become homeless.

- The **Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)** Program is VA's primary prevention program designed to provide both prevention and rapid re-housing services to very low-income Veteran families. The SSVF Program continues to serve a high proportion of women, due in part, to the greater number of households with children served with prevention assistance.

#### **Program Highlights:**

- In FY 2015 alone, SSVF grantees exceeded the number of projected participants by serving more than 157,400 individuals who were homeless or at-risk of homelessness.
  - Of the nearly 99,000 Veterans assisted, roughly 13,900 or 14 percent were women and over 14,500 served in Iraq or Afghanistan.
  - SSVF kept families together, serving a little over 34,600 children.
  - 78 percent of those discharged from the program obtained permanent housing.

### **Transitional housing**

- VA's **Homeless Providers Grant Per Diem (GPD)** Program allows VA to award grants to community-based agencies to create transitional housing programs and offer per diem payments. The purpose is to promote the development and provision of supportive housing and/or supportive services with the goal of helping homeless

Veterans, to include women Veterans, achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and/or income, and obtain greater self-determination. GPD-funded projects offer communities a way to help homeless Veterans with housing and services while assisting VA medical centers (VAMC) by augmenting or supplementing care.

**Program Highlights:**

- In FY 2015, nearly over 43,000 unique Veterans were provided services through the GPD Program.
- Of these roughly 3,200 or approximately 7 percent were women.

**Residential Treatment**

- **VHA's Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs (MH RRTP)** provide residential treatment to Veterans with mental health and substance use disorders (SUD), co-occurring medical concerns, and psychosocial needs including homelessness and unemployment.
- All of the programs provide services to homeless Veterans, including women Veterans. This includes residential treatment programs specifically for treatment of SUD, posttraumatic stress disorder and other mental health concerns. Among those programs, there are programs specifically for women only and approximately 50 percent of all residential treatment programs have separate units or wings specifically for women Veterans.
- Two of the programs, specifically the **Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) and Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence (CWT-TR)** are part of the homeless continuum of care.
- The **DCHV** Program provides homeless Veterans access to medical, mental health, and substance use disorder treatment in addition to psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation treatment programs.

**Program Highlights:**

- For FY 2015, there were 47 DCHV programs with a little over 2,400 beds.
- For FY 2015, DCHV programs provided care to over 8,400 homeless Veterans including roughly 600 women Veterans.
- The **CWT/TR** programs provide time-limited transitional housing with supported employment services. The services focus on transitioning Veterans to permanent housing, employment and continued engagement in recovery services.

**Program Highlights:**

- For FY 2015, there were 42 CWT-TR programs with over 630 beds.
- For FY 2015, CWT-TR provided care to over 1,360 homeless Veterans including 92 women Veterans.

**Permanent Supportive Housing**

- **The Department of Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program** A collaborative program between HUD and VA where eligible homeless Veterans receive a Housing Choice rental voucher from HUD, paired with VA providing case management and supportive services to sustain housing stability and recovery from physical and mental health

problems, substance use disorders, and functional concerns contributing to or resulting from homelessness. HUD-VASH subscribes to the principles of the “Housing First” model of care. Housing First is an evidence based practice model that has demonstrated rapidly moving individuals into housing, and then wrapping supportive services around them as needed, helps homeless individuals exit from homelessness, remain stable in housing, and thus improving ability and motivation to engage in treatment strategies. Program goals include housing stability while promoting maximum Veteran recovery and independence in the community for the Veteran and the Veteran’s family.

**Program Highlights:**

- In FY 2015, the HUD-VASH Program assisted 71,155 Veterans, of which approximately 12 percent of the Veterans are women.
- Women Veterans and their families are served through the HUD-VASH Program because the Veteran and the Veteran’s family live in the Veteran’s own apartment or house, utilizing HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher.

**Financial and Employment Support**

Homeless women Veterans face barriers to employment (i.e., accessible and affordable child care and skills translatable to civilian workforce). We know that homeless and at-risk women Veterans need access to employment opportunities to support their housing needs, improve the quality of their lives, and assist in their reintegration efforts.

- **VA’s Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCES)** In order to help improve employment outcomes and reach the most difficult to serve homeless Veterans, in FY 2015 continued to support the newly hired Vocational Development Specialists (VDS) who serve as Community Employment Coordinators (CEC) within the Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCES) framework. The new CECs are responsible for the ongoing orientation and training of the Homeless Services continuum to increase the role of employment in permanent housing and for providing direct assistance in connecting Veterans to the most appropriate and least restrictive VA and/or community-based employment service leading to competitive employment with appropriate supports.

**Program Highlights:**

- In FY 2015, 96 percent of the CECs had been hired across approximately 150 medical centers.
- Employment Rates for Veterans exiting Homeless Residential Programs increased by approximately 3% over FY 2014 rates.
- The CECs served 6,546 homeless Veterans in FY 2015, of which 723 were women Veterans, approximately 11 percent.

**Veterans Justice Programs**

- The most recent information available on Veterans who are incarcerated indicates that 1 percent of Veterans in prison and 3 percent of Veterans in jail are women (BJS, 2015, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=5479>).
- Since criminal justice involvement and the transition from incarceration to community living are both risk factors for homelessness, VA has created two programs to serve justice involved Veterans:

- Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV), which provides outreach to Veterans in state and federal prisons.
- Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO), which provides outreach to Veterans in jails and courts.
- Both programs aim to match Veterans with clinically appropriate services that prevent homelessness and end future contact with the criminal justice system.

**Program Highlights:**

- In FY 2015, HCRV served roughly 300 women Veterans, approximately 2 percent.
- In FY 2015, VJO served a little over 2,700 women Veterans, approximately 6 percent.

A list of Health Care for Reentry Veterans contacts can be found here:

<http://www.va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp>

A list of Veterans Justice Outreach contacts can be found here:

<http://www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp>

**Treatment**

VA offers a full continuum of health and mental health services to women Veterans. Specific offerings vary from facility to facility, based on local demand and resources. For example, some facilities have established formal outpatient mental health treatment teams specializing in working with women Veterans. In addition, VA’s services and programs for homeless and at-risk Veterans are engaged with VA’s Women’s Health Services to support a systematic and coordinated approach to care.

***Military sexual trauma (MST)*** is the term used by VA to refer to sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment experienced during military service. Homeless women Veterans who use VA healthcare have higher rates of experiencing MST compared to all women Veterans who use VA healthcare. MST-related healthcare for physical and mental health conditions is available free of charge at every VHA facility. There is a MST Coordinator at every VA medical center who can connect Veterans who have experienced MST to VA healthcare programs and services.

***Trauma-informed care:*** In partnership with VA’s National Center on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, the Homeless Program Office National Center on Homelessness among Veterans is developing training modules to assist clinicians in addressing the specific needs of women Veterans who are homeless.

***Women Veteran Program Managers (WVPMs)*** are located at every VA medical center. The WVPMs help coordinate all the services that women Veterans may need. Services include primary care, pregnancy care, psychiatric care and sexual abuse counseling, inpatient medical/surgical care, programs for homeless women Veterans, and quality of care issues. For additional information, please visit

<http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/programoverview/wvpm.asp>

## Outreach

VA conducts homeless clinical outreach at shelters, on the street, and at community events. Conducting outreach efforts in the community is the key to engaging women homeless Veterans and connecting them to VA's services.

- The **Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)** programs aim to reduce homelessness among Veterans by engaging and connecting homeless Veterans with healthcare and other needed services.
- HCHV programs provide outreach, case management, and HCHV Contract Residential Services ensuring that chronically homeless Veterans, especially those with serious mental health diagnoses and/or substance use disorders, can be placed in VA or community-based programs that provide quality housing and services that meet the needs of these special populations.
- A list of HCHV coordinators is located online at:  
[http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/HCHV\\_Sites\\_ByState.pdf](http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/HCHV_Sites_ByState.pdf)

### **Program Highlights:**

- In FY 2015, approximately 17,230 women were served through clinical outreach, and a little over 820 women were served through contract residential services in the HCHV Program.

## **Contact Us**

To find the VA facility nearest to you, please visit:

<http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp>

For more details on VA's services for women Veterans who are homeless or at risk of being homeless visit [http://www.va.gov/homeless/for\\_women\\_veterans.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/for_women_veterans.asp)

More detailed information on all of VA's Programs for Homeless Veterans can be found on the internet at <http://www.va.gov/homeless>

To learn more about Women Veterans Health Care contact the Women Veterans Call Center at **1-855-VA-Women (1-855-829-6636)** or visit <http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/>

If you, or a Veteran you know, are at risk of homelessness contact VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at **1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838)** to speak to a trained VA responder.

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