

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# Sexual Assault Awareness Month

James A. Leathem, LCSW-R

*National Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Support Team  
VHA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention*

## Rapid Resolution: A Re-Introduction

John Kuhn, *SSVF National Director*

Mike Boyd, *SSVF Regional Coordinator*

Jennifer Colbert, *SSVF Regional Coordinator Supervisor*

Eileen Devine, *HCHV National Director*

[Link to Audio](#)



## WEBINAR FORMAT

- Webinar will last approximately 1.5 hours
- Participants' phone connections are “muted” due to the high number of callers
- Questions can also be submitted anytime to [SSVF@va.gov](mailto:SSVF@va.gov)
- The presentation can be downloaded from the handout section in your control panel



# AGENDA

- Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- Rapid Resolution Re-Introduction
  - Welcome and Introductions
  - Rapid Resolution History
  - Defining Terms
  - Rapid Resolution Core Practices
  - VA Coordination and Resources
  - Question & Answers

# Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2022

*We Believe You, and We Believe in You*

**James A. Leathem, LCSW-R**

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VHA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention*



VA Cares About  
Military Sexual Trauma



# Sexual Assault Awareness Month



- Every April, VHA hosts activities in recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)
- MST Support Team engages in special educational and awareness-raising efforts
- MST Coordinators and partners traditionally host events such as:
  - Clothesline Projects, Ribbons of Support and Speakers/presentations and recently some online and virtual events such as:
  - Zoom educational presentations and lunch & learns
  - Electronic handouts & educational materials
  - Online art/photographic exhibits

# National Ad Campaign

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- MST Support Team again worked with the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention communications team to develop national ads that will roll out throughout April
- Various platforms including social media, Facebook, Instagram, and banners on websites
- Video and display ads in select mid-sized markets with large Veteran populations, raising awareness of MST and VA's MST-related services; posters/billboards and short 15-second video ads that will run in public locations
- We're excited at the opportunity to reach not only individuals who experienced MST, but friends, family, and the public, as last year's campaign was extremely successful

# Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2022

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**WE BELIEVE  
YOU AND  
WE BELIEVE  
IN YOU**

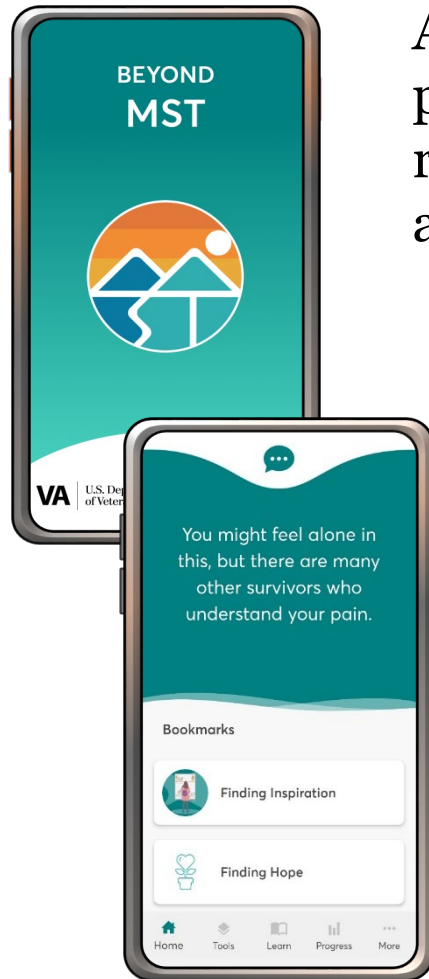
# Your Work and Your Support are Vital

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- MST Coordinators may reach out to you as they plan and advertise events; it's also fine to reach out to them
- Be on the lookout for virtual and live activities during the month of April at your facilities. They are a great opportunity to:
  - Convey the system's support for MST survivors and educate others about VA's free MST-related services
  - Reduce stigma and shame related to MST, which can be associated with mental and physical health difficulties, increased risk, social isolation, and barriers to care for those most at risk
  - Exchange outreach and education materials (forward emails)
  - Enhance your own connections and outreach efforts!
- No involvement is too "small"



# Beyond MST Mobile App



A free, secure, convenient and trauma-sensitive way for people who experienced MST to access information and resources to help in coping with challenges related to MST and to improve health, relationships and quality of life

- A self-help resource, useful alone or with treatment
- Over 30 tools and features to cope, reduce distress, feel less alone, improve well-being and find hope
- Assessments to understand trauma-related symptoms and beliefs and track progress toward recovery goals

Learn more at [tinyurl.com/BeyondMST](https://tinyurl.com/BeyondMST) or visit [vaww.mst.va.gov](http://vaww.mst.va.gov) for training and promotional materials



# Thank you for all that you do to help our most in-need Veterans!

MST Resource Homepage (for staff): <https://vaww.mst.va.gov>

Find Your VHA MST Coordinator:

<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VHAMST/contacts/mst-coordinators>

VA MST internet website (for Veterans and public):

<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome>

*VA Services for Military Sexual Trauma:*



Help  
Hope  
Healing

James Leathem, LCSW-R; [James.Leathem@va.gov](mailto:James.Leathem@va.gov)



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# Welcome and VA Priorities

## John Kuhn, SSVF National Director



**“Rents are up more than 30 percent in some cities, forcing millions to find another place to live”**

Washington Post 1/30/22



# INCREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY

- Build new units
  - Expensive
  - Takes years
- Identify “new” housing within existing supply





## RAPID RESOLUTION AS A HOUSING OPTION

- Housing placement with Veteran's family, friends or social supports
- Uses specific engagement skills to identify an alternative to literal homelessness

**Other names:** *Diversion, Problem-Solving Conversation, Rapid Exit, Mediation, Strengths-Based Work*



## BENEFITS OF RAPID RESOLUTION

- Stem inflows, reducing demand for limited affordable housing stock
- Avoid trauma of homelessness
- Reduce costs, allowing resources to be concentrated on higher needs
- Reduce social isolation



- Conflict Mediation
- Veteran may bring financial assistance
- Household members (Veteran's family) may be eligible for services





## RETURN TO SSVF'S CORE MISSION

- End homelessness
  - RRH
  - Rapid Resolution (rapid exit)
- Prevent homelessness
  - Rapid Resolution (diversion)
  - HP for imminently at-risk
- Progressive engagement
  - Shallow subsidies
  - HUD-VASH and other PH subsidies



## Address critical service gaps

- Health care navigation
- Legal assistance

## Ensure safety

- Same day enrollment (SQUARES)
- Emergency housing (March 2021 guidance )



# Rapid Resolution: Re-Introduction

Mike Boyd, LMSW  
SSVF Regional Coordinator



**empathetic** **listening** **build trust**  
**brainstorming** **empowerment** **be positive**  
**diversion** **safe place** **resourceful** **quiet space**  
**mediation** **family options**  
**rapid resolution**  
**problem solving** **client choice** **partners** **housing**  
**trauma informed** **friends** **safety** **conflict resolution**  
**respectful** **creative**  
**crisis resolution** **social networks** **rapid exit**  
**open-ended questions** **natural supports** **action oriented** **active listening**  
**follow up** **trust**



## RAPID RESOLUTION HISTORY

- Began with pilot rollout in 2018 amongst group of approximately 20 communities/grantees
- National Rollout in 2019 included compliance guidance, Regional Meeting trainings, 1:1 TA and other supports
- Train the Trainer with VA and TA partners developed in 2019 and into early 2020 to push Rapid Resolution deeper into communities
- COVID-19 stopped training and focus shifted to emergency housing response and public health



## RAPID RESOLUTION DEFINED

- Using Housing Problem Solving (HPS) approaches with the primary goal of avoiding homelessness (diversion) or ensuring it's as brief as possible for those recently entered into shelter, transitional housing, or who are unsheltered (rapid exit).
- SSVF and non-SSVF providers can use HPS system-wide while RR services are specific to SSVF enroll Veterans.
- Rapid Resolution is not a separate program and not a one-time conversation, but a set of approaches to be considered at all points in a homeless crisis. HPS approaches result in ongoing SSVF RR services.





## OTHER KEY TERMS

**Housing Problem Solving:** Strategies and services that assist households to use their strengths, support networks, and community resources to find safe, decent and appropriate housing as soon as possible outside of the homeless crisis response system, even if temporarily.

**Homelessness Prevention:** Homelessness prevention strategies represent a wide array of efforts to prevent housing crises from occurring and to prevent people who face such crises from experiencing homelessness.

**Diversion:** Diversion strategies and practices seek to assist people to resolve their immediate housing crisis by accessing a safe and appropriate housing alternative versus entering emergency shelter or otherwise staying in a place not meant for human habitation that night.

**Rapid Exit:** Rapid exit strategies are appropriate after a household has entered emergency shelter or stayed in an unsheltered setting and serves to help them move as quickly as possible back into safe, appropriate temporary or permanent housing with the support of services and a minimal level of financial assistance.



## RAPID RESOLUTION CORE GOAL

Using **Housing Problem Solving (HPS)** approaches to identify safe alternative options to homelessness that are:

- Available immediately or quickly,
- Based on Veteran's choice,
- Using an exploratory, conversation style which focuses on revealing Veteran's existing strengths and supports.
- For housing potentially longer-term or permanent.
- When placement isn't long term, it still has the effect of de-escalating the housing crisis so longer-term housing planning can occur.







## RAPID RESOLUTION METHODS

- HPS **intentionally builds trust and rapport** through an exploratory, non-judging stance of active listening and question asking designed to discover a Veteran's strengths and existing resources.
- Mediates concerns helping **resolve conflicts** between Veterans and their family, friends, and other support systems.
- Uses a **strength-based** exploratory stance for immediate crisis resolution and longer-term housing goals and pathways.
- Treats each Veteran individually by **recognizing their potential past trauma, current unique crisis, and key strengths and assets**
- Help identify not only if – but what – **longer term housing** supports are appropriate and feasible



## RAPID RESOLUTION CONSIDERATIONS

- Homelessness, including shelter and transitional housing, can be traumatic. Avoiding continued trauma should be everyone's priority.
- Culture shift – Developing HPS skills changes how we initially engage with Veterans, emphasizing the individual's existing strengths and supports, rather than focusing solely on their barriers.
- Preservation of finite resources – Diverting Veterans from longer use of emergency resources keeps these resources available to those who need it most.
- **Training and Staff Skills are critically important** – SSVF will continue to provide training and references



## RAPID RESOLUTION CONSIDERATIONS

- **Same Day Access** policy to ensure safety, and new HP Screener specifically require Rapid Resolution efforts and progressive assistance
- Limited TFA may be offered. However, TFA is often secondary to problem solving and mediation.
- Traditional SSVF services can be offered at any point they are needed after SSVF enrollment – **not a denial of services but rather the beginning of a progressive approach**



# EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Important to recognize our own implicit biases when exploring alternatives and planning services
- Veteran choice, safety and experience are critically important
- Black, Indigenous and People of Color, as well as LGBTQ+ and other populations may have experienced increased and trauma, housing challenges and other inequities due to historical racism and prejudice
- Legal services, landlord mediation, and other services may be more urgent for historically disenfranchised populations





### RR efforts may be particularly helpful for certain situations

- Older Veterans who may have natural family supports to explore
- Veterans who may be willing to have a roommate (shared housing)
- Veterans who were doubled up or living with others where SSVF can mediate a solution
- Veterans with a lease in place where legal service connections and mediation can resolve housing conflicts
- Any Veterans, regardless of perceived vulnerability, who may have other avenues to avoid or exit homelessness



# Example Outcomes

**Able to Rapidly Resolve**

**Longer  
Term back  
with family  
or friends**

**Temporarily  
diverted as  
they seek  
new  
housing**

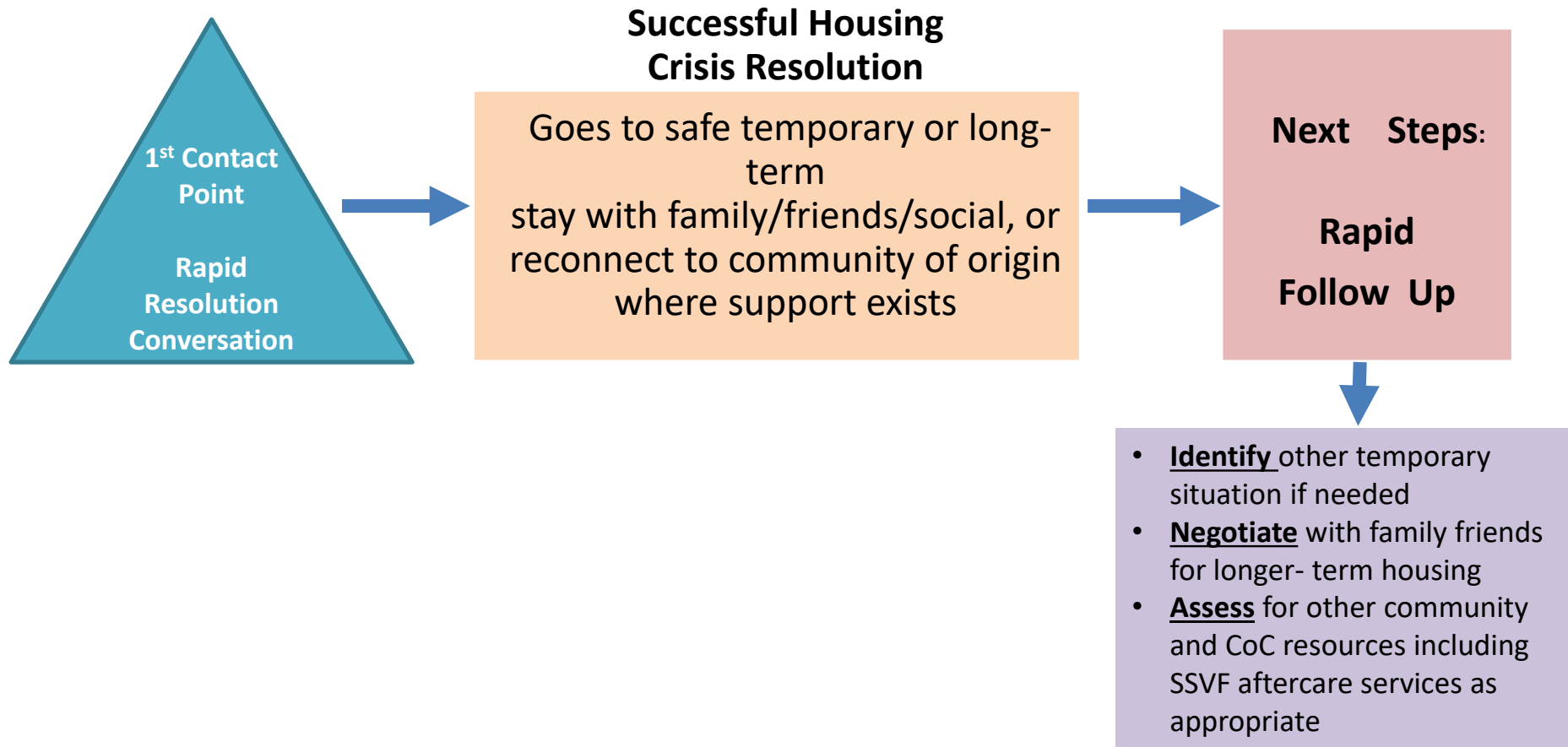
**Relocating  
permanently  
to safe place  
in another  
community  
with  
supports**

**Ongoing RR,  
Offer of Perm  
Housing and  
CE  
Assessment  
Protocol**

**Follow up and services as needed to support PH needs**

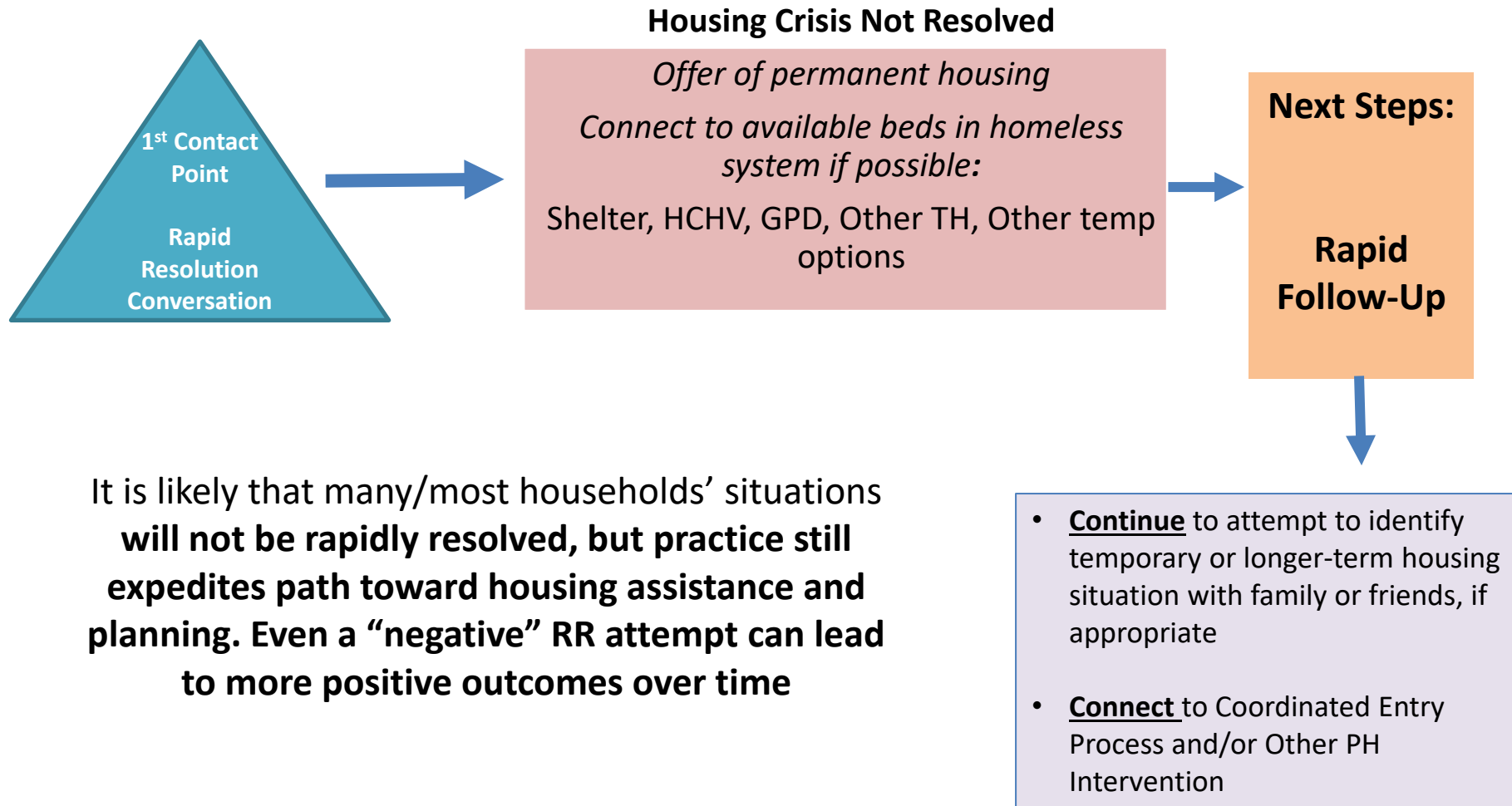


# Successful Rapid Resolution Path





# Unsuccessful Rapid Resolution Pathway







# Support Services for the Client and/or Host

## VETERAN HOUSEHOLD

### Supportive Services

- Connection to Mainstream benefits
- Connection to VA benefits
- Case Management services
- Legal Services
- Health Care Navigation
- Income and Employment Connections
- Housing support, including budgeting and other life skills
- Coordination with landlords or housing associations
- Lease and tenant law expertise
- Connections to other community benefits, resources and social service providers
- Relocation Services (Returning Home)

### Limited TFA for specific housing related expenses

- Limited rent or emergency housing payments
- Basic groceries and household goods
- Limited Childcare support
- Limited Transportation support, including vehicle repairs
- Items need for health and safety to promote housing stability

### Traditional SSVF rehousing services if needed

## THE HOST

- Limited contribution for expense of hosting
- Time-limited services to resolve shared housing issues
- Referrals to community resources for host health, mental health, etc.
- Coordination of more permanent housing options with Veteran

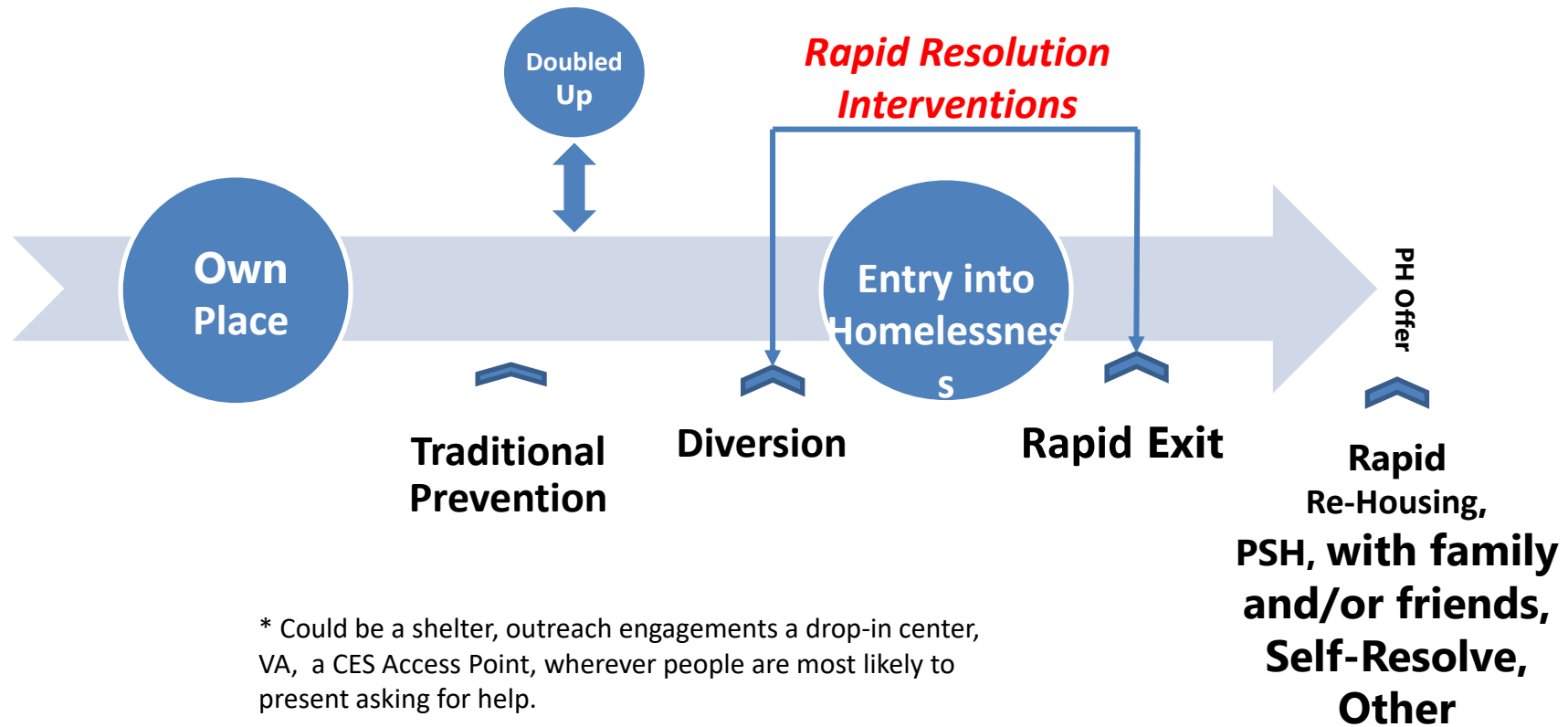


# Rapid Resolution: Partner Coordination

Jennifer Colbert, LCSW  
SSVF Regional Coordinator Supervisor



# Position of Rapid Resolution in the System





## COORDINATION CONSIDERATIONS

- SSVF active participation in Coordinated Entry and Community Planning
- Coordinated, equity-informed outreach and in-reach with VA and community partners
- Same Day Access to SSVF when necessary to ensure Veteran safety with system coordination for long term housing plans; linkages to other temporary options as available and needed
- VAMC SSVF Coordination for Homelessness Prevention/Diversion needs
- SSVF Point of Contact and Coordinated Entry Leads key partners



## RAPID RESOLUTION ACTIONS

- Inform VA and Community Partners of SSVF Prevention and Diversion capacity
- Review data to inform inreach/outreach needs with a focus on promoting equity, particularly for those at risk of homelessness who may not be accessing services
- Review internal hiring and professional development practices to:
  - Ensure hiring is driven with equity lens
  - Promote training and skills that meet the current realities
  - Support staff in managing Veteran plan decisions and pathways
  - Identify areas of cross-training with CoC, VA and other partners

**Priority! Proactively involve Veterans with lived experience of homelessness to identify gaps and adjust program operations**



# SSVF PROGRAM OFFICE SUPPORT

- Continued focus on grantee capacity to provide Rapid Resolution services as part of the overall SSVF package
- Coming updates to Program Guide to include Rapid Resolution services
- 2022 In Person and Virtual Trainings to be Offered
- Continue feedback from grantees on how to best position SSVF to stem inflows





# COORDINATED ENTRY AND FINANCIAL ALERT 2022-004

Eileen Devine  
HCHV National Director



# VA Coordinated Entry Expectations

- HUD requires all communities develop and operate a Coordinated Entry System (CES) for all homeless individuals, including Veterans.
- CES is a critical element in our work to end Veteran homelessness.
- VA's participation in their local CES is essential to this national effort.





# VA Coordinated Entry Expectations

- Engagement and active collaboration with CoC on plans to end Veteran Homelessness
- Community Case Conferencing Participation
- Coordinated Outreach Efforts
- By-Name-List Participation
- Utilization of Assessment process, including diversion efforts
- Dedication of VA Resources to CES
- Data Sharing



# VA Coordinated Entry Specialists

- Next level in our VAMC integration into Coordinated Entry Systems.
- CE policy implementation is an on-going, evolving process.
- Coordinated Entry Specialist positions were created to assist and lead this process.
- Sense of urgency and also ongoing process of continuous learning.
- Deep level of collaboration.
- Strategic use of resources including diversion and prevention efforts
- Coordinated entry is a complex system change where VA is a critical partner.



# Re-Invest in CES Collaboration

- Discuss current engagement of VA homeless programs in community's coordinated entry process
- Share new ideas about increasing engagement and coordination of VA resources into coordinated entry
- Explore whether the VA's engagement can be used as a model to approach other systems about their coordination with coordinated entry



# VA Financial Alert 2022-004

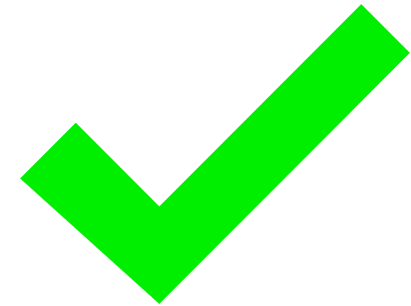
- Public Law (PL) 116-315 section 4201(a) provides VA with the authority to use appropriated funds for homeless Veterans and those enrolled in the HUD-VASH program during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency declared by Federal, State or local authority.
- VA may provide homeless Veterans and those enrolled in the HUD-VASH program with assistance required for safety and survival, transportation, and digital communications.
- This Financial Alert operationalizes this law and provides guidance on the use of appropriated funds for expenditures to support homeless Veterans and those in the HUD-VASH program.



# VA Coordinated Entry Expectations

## Allowable Purchases:

- The item or service will enhance the safety, survival, wellbeing, or living conditions of the Veteran; and
- If the item or service is not provided, it will increase the Veteran's risk of adverse outcomes, including but not limited to loss of housing or continuation of homelessness, infection, hunger, hypothermia, poor hygiene, unemployment, missed health care and service appointments, social isolation, or exacerbation of physical and mental health symptoms.
- Allowable Expense Categories\*:
  - Food
  - Personal Items
  - Household goods
  - Shelter
  - Transportation required to support stability and health
  - Communications equipment and services



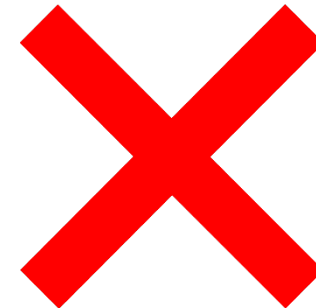
**\*Refer to section 6 of the [Financial Alert](#) for a comprehensive, detailed list, of approved expenses, by category.**



# Financial Alert 2022-004

## **Expenditures not allowed under this authority:**

- Debts such as credit card bills, car loans, or personal loans.
- Purchase of items that are not directly related to safety and survival during a covered public health emergency (personal entertainment equipment, etc.).
- Purchase of items after the covered public health emergency has ended.
- Utilities, travel, technology equipment expenses for VA employees, contractors, or grantees.
- Hazard pay for VA employees, contractors, or grantees.
- Overtime (OT) for VA employees or contractors.
- Items purchased with the intent of resale.
- Gift cards.



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# Questions & Answers