

# RETURNING HOME

*Helping Homeless Veterans Find Housing in Their Community of Origin.*

2nd Edition Released  
November 8, 2018

## Returning Home

### *Helping Homeless Veterans Find Housing in Their Community of Origin*

**Concept:** Offer homeless Veteran households the option of returning to their community of origin or to a community where the Veteran has available supports to facilitate housing placement. These placements would be supported with resources from the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program.

**Background:** An analysis conducted by the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV) found that 15.3 percent of all homeless Veterans migrated across VISNs in the two-year period of 2011 to 2012. Among chronically homeless Veterans, migration occurs even more frequently and comprised 20 percent of that population. Although the number of homeless Veterans who migrated within a VISN is not known, it would certainly significantly increase the percentage of homeless Veterans who have moved into new communities. For Veteran households that have migrated to metropolitan areas with low housing vacancy rates, the barriers they face to finding suitable housing may be particularly acute. With few supports, these Veterans do not have the family and friends that often offer not only social and emotional support, but are frequently the safety net that prevents these households from falling into homelessness.

Using data from the US Census and Point in Time counts, the following communities were identified as having particularly high rates of homelessness as well as low housing vacancy rates and high rents:

Los Angeles (CA-600) / Long Beach (CA-606)  
San Diego (CA-601)  
San Francisco (CA-501) / Oakland (CA-502)  
Santa Clara (CA-500)  
Seattle (WA-500)

**Plan:** As significant numbers of homeless Veteran households have migrated to communities where they have few supports and limited prospects for finding permanent housing, VA can offer these Veterans the option of returning to their community of origin with the assurance of permanent housing through SSVF, often in collaboration with the VA Medical Centers.

This opportunity provides a number of benefits:

1. It will reduce homelessness.
2. It will allow Veteran households to return to communities where they are more likely to have a familial and social support network.
3. It may support family reunification.
4. It will reduce competition for scarce affordable housing for those homeless Veterans remaining in target communities with low vacancy rates.

5. It may be used to link Veterans to employment, providing the income critical to sustain permanent housing.

This intervention will be offered in the five communities identified in the table above, as well as in the following pilot communities for Rapid Resolution:

Chicago, IL (IL-510)  
Pinellas County, FL (FL-502)  
Phoenix, AZ (AZ-502)  
Detroit, MI (MI-501)  
Columbus, OH (OH-503)  
Ohio Balance of State (OH-507)  
New York City (NY-600)  
Washington, DC (DC-500)

The opportunity would be presented to the Veteran after the assessment has been complete and history of moves is understood. It is expected that Veterans agreeing to a return home or relocation to a community where available supports can facilitate successful housing placement will fall into one of three broadly defined groups.

Group 1: Veterans seeking family reunification and housing with their family or other social support in their community of origin. SSVF must have direct communication with the social support offering housing to ensure the environment is safe and offers the potential for stable housing after placement.

Group 2: Chronically homeless Veterans, who as noted are more likely to migrate, or other Veteran households with significant and ongoing social services needs seeking independent housing in their community of origin. This may include HUD-VASH participants who have not yet been vouchered or placed in permanent housing.

Group 3: Veteran households who are able to identify employment either through HVCES or other resources and need only short-term social service support to facilitate their transition back to their community of origin.

For all groups, prior to supporting any move, SSVF must confirm that adequate supports exist in the community where placement is made.

SSVF will be involved to provide transportation assistance. Under 38 CFR 62.33, SSVF is able to provide such assistance to facilitate placement into permanent housing. SSVF may also support housing search and inspection efforts, provide case management, and financial assistance for security deposits, rent, and utilities as necessary. SSVF will work with community and VA partners to ensure that appropriate service linkages have been made *prior* to any move.

**Impact:** Homelessness will be reduced, Veterans' quality of life will be better supported over the long-term, and communities with limited available affordable housing stock will be better able to serve those homeless Veterans remaining.

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Q: What are the *departure* communities for Returning Home?**

**A:** Given their PIT counts, high cost and low vacancy rates mentioned above, the departure communities for Returning Home are Los Angeles (CA-600) / Long Beach (CA-606), San Diego (CA-601), San Francisco (CA-501) / Oakland (CA-502), San Jose/Santa Clara County (CA-500), and Seattle (WA-500).

More recently, the pilot sites for Rapid Resolution have also been added as departure communities for Returning Home. These sites are Chicago, IL (IL-510) Pinellas County, FL (FL-502), Phoenix, AZ (AZ-502), Detroit, MI (MI-501), Columbus, OH (OH-503), Ohio Balance of State (OH-507), New York City (NY-600) and Washington, DC (DC-500).

**Q: How do we determine appropriateness of an *arrival* community for Returning Home?**

**A:** There are several factors. For Group 1, confirmation should be obtained that Veteran will be moving in with familial or social support. For Groups 2 and 3, the arrival communities that the Veteran indicates must be deemed by HUD standards as having more affordable rent with higher vacancy rates. For all groups, it must be determined that the Veteran household can be placed in sustainable housing in the arrival community prior to any move.

See pages 6 and 7 for "Returning Home Request," which must be completed and submitted for approval prior to any Veteran's move.

**Q: How do we determine Veteran eligibility for Returning Home?**

**A:** Veterans who are enrolled in SSVF for Rapid Rehousing, as well as Veterans enrolled in HUD-VASH but have yet to receive a voucher, can be considered. Please note that Returning Home cannot support Veteran cases that are already placed in permanent housing nor HUD-VASH participants who are seeking to port their vouchers.

**Q: How do we determine income eligibility?**

**A:** AMI standards in the departure community will be used for SSVF program admission, but rent reasonableness of the arrival community should be considered. After the move takes place, the arrival community's AMI will be used for eligibility *after* recertification takes place. Until that recertification occurs, the departure community's AMI will be used for eligibility determination.

**Q: Who provides funds for the Veteran's move?**

**A:** The SSVF grantee in the departure community will provide funds for the Veteran's move, security and utility deposits, and rental assistance. The SSVF grantee in the departure community may continue to provide TFA until the next recertification

requirement. The SSVF grantee in the arrival community will be responsible for completing the recertification when required. If the household remains eligible for services, the SSVF grantee in the arrival community may continue providing services and TFA as needed.

**Q: Can we use gift cards for gasoline, food and lodging during Veteran's travel to arrival community?**

**A:** Yes, gift cards for gasoline, food and lodging are allowable for Returning Home.

The amount based on the government mileage reimbursement rate for gasoline is \$0.54/mile.

For Veterans who require a "per diem" for food during their travel to the arrival community, please refer to amounts for GSA meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) (found here: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>). Determination of per diem rate would be an average of maximum allowable M&IE between the departure community and the arrival community. For example, if a Veteran is coming from Los Angeles, CA (departure community), which has an M&IE rate of \$66/day, and traveling to Tampa, FL (arrival community), which has an M&IE rate of \$61/day, the per diem rate during the Veteran's travel would be \$63.50/day. If needed, this same rate could also be applied to each household member included in the SSVF enrollment and travel to arrival community.

If the Veteran requires an overnight stay, please reference the same website above to locate the maximum allowable lodging rate for the city where Veteran will be staying.

For airfare, cost reasonableness should be determined after review of GSA airline city pairs (found here: <https://cpsearch.fas.gsa.gov/cpsearch/search.do>).

Regarding documentation, the SSVF grantee in the departure community must document participant name, amount, and purpose for issuing all gift cards. The SSVF grantee in the arrival community will be responsible for obtaining receipts once the Veteran arrives, and must send copies of the receipts to the SSVF grantee in the departure community. Please note that the purchase of gift cards is approved for Returning Home only and is impermissible for all other participants.

**Q: How do the SSVF grantees in both the departure community and the arrival community document Returning Home participation?**

**A:** Veterans who have been approved by SSVF Program Office for Returning Home should be enrolled in the Rapid Rehousing (RRH) project type in HMIS. Within HMIS, Returning Home participants must be identified by adding a service under V2 Services Provided using the following format:

- Select the "Other (non-TFA) Supportive Service."

- Enter “Returning Home - D” into the text box for Returning Home services provided by the departing community. Only the Head of Household needs this “Other” service tracked in HMIS.
- Enter “Returning Home – A” into the text box for Returning Home services provided by the arriving community. Only the Head of Household needs this “Other” service tracked in HMIS.

Note: If a household is both a Returning Home and Rapid Resolution household, two distinct “V2 Other (non-TFA) Supportive Service” activities should exist in their program record.

Grantees should only track one of each type of “Other” service as described above, if applicable. For example, you do not need to enter multiple “RR” (Rapid Resolution) services. Only one “RR” service is needed to indicate that the household received Rapid Resolution services.

Signed ROI to speak with Veteran’s familial or social support in arrival community should be uploaded in HMIS, as well as any other supplemental documentation. Grantee in the departure community will keep Veteran’s case open in HMIS until they are no longer providing TFA and once case has been fully transferred to grantee in the arrival community.

**Q: What are the main differences in grantee responsibilities between the departure community and the arrival community?**

**A:** The grantees in the departure communities are responsible for (but not limited to):

- Completing ROI and retrieving written confirmation that social support in arrival community that Veteran will move-in with them on a long-term basis (may blend with Rapid Resolution).
- Ensuring that there is a viable housing plan in place prior to Veteran’s departure.
- Seeking confirmation that the support person in the arrival community is willing to house the Veteran either permanently or until the Veteran is able to move in to their own stable housing.
- Seeking approval from SSVF Program Office (see pages 6 and 7 for “Returning Home Request”).
- Planning details of trip with Veteran only after receipt of approval from SSVF Program Office. Approval confirmation will include point of contact (POC) at grantee agency in the arrival community.
- Coordinating Veteran’s travel, arrival and care with POC noted above. This may occur via phone and/or email, and could include the Regional Coordinators assigned to both the departure and arrival communities.
- Paying for Veteran’s move, which must be of reasonable cost, as well as any other allowable costs before the next recertification occurs.
- Maintaining contact with the Veteran during trip to the arrival community.

The grantees in the arrival communities are responsible for (but not limited to):

- Conducting a housing inspection prior to Veteran's move. *This is only for Veterans who have not yet lived with social support in the arrival community, and social support will be receiving TFA through Rapid Resolution. Grantee will notify grantee in the departure community of housing appropriateness. In this scenario, Veteran can only travel to arrival community once housing inspection has been approved by grantee in arrival community.*
  - *Note: The same procedures also apply for Veterans who have identified independent housing in the arrival community and are seeking rental assistance upon move-in.*
- Enrolling Veteran in SSVF program upon Veteran's arrival, and provide local case management and other services/referrals as needed. Please note that, for the purposes of adequately ensuring the Veteran's safety and addressing any potential need for continued care, SSVF enrollment in the arrival community is a requirement.
- Sending pre-loadable gift cards and receipts retained during Veteran's move back to SSVF grantee in the departure community.
- Assisting Veteran with enrolling into local VAMC if eligible. 10 10 EZ found here: <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/1010EZ-fillable.pdf>

**Q: How do we receive approval to assist a Veteran through Returning Home?**

**A:** See below for "Returning Home Request." Please complete the questions below in their entirety and email your answers to [Maxine.Pulliam@va.gov](mailto:Maxine.Pulliam@va.gov) or [Catherine.Morrissett@va.gov](mailto:Catherine.Morrissett@va.gov) for review and approval prior to any Veteran's move. In your requests, please include your grant number and what approved CoC the Veteran is being served in. Please keep a record of your email approvals for Returning Home so that you may have them during your OIC audits.

For SSVF grantees who serve Los Angeles (CA-600), Long Beach (CA-606), San Diego (CA-601), Santa Clara (CA-500), Chicago, IL (IL-510), Pinellas County, FL (FL-502) and Phoenix, AZ (AZ-502), please email your completed Returning Home Request to Regional Coordinator Maxie Pulliam at [Maxine.Pulliam@va.gov](mailto:Maxine.Pulliam@va.gov).

For SSVF grantees who serve San Francisco (CA-501), Oakland (CA-502), Seattle (WA-500), Detroit, MI (MI-501), Columbus, OH (OH-503), Ohio Balance of State (OH-507), New York City (NY-600) and Washington, DC (DC-500), please email your completed Returning Home Request to Regional Coordinator Katie Morrissett at [Catherine.Morrissett@va.gov](mailto:Catherine.Morrissett@va.gov).

**Returning Home Request**

- Where is the Veteran household currently staying?
- Where does the Veteran want to move to?

- Is the Veteran currently in possession of a HUD-VASH or Section 8 voucher? *Please note that Returning Home cannot support the porting of vouchers to another area.*
- Is the Veteran able to travel on their own? *Please note that, if an SSVF staff member or other social supports want to accompany the Veteran during their travels, SSVF funds cannot be used to support the staff member nor social supports.*
- Will the Veteran be moving in with social support (a family member, friend, etc.)? If yes, has the grantee received written confirmation that the social support will house the household on a long-term basis.
- Please briefly describe the living situation that the Veteran will be entering, i.e., spare bedroom, accessory dwelling unit (ADU), their own house/apartment, etc.
- Does the social support who will host the Veteran require assistance through the Rapid Resolution Service? If so, what?
- If the Veteran is moving into independent housing in the arrival community, please describe where they are with the housing location process, i.e., promissory note from landlord. And is the Veteran seeking rental assistance?
- If the Veteran is moving into independent housing in the arrival community, do they have a move-in date? If not, is there a confirmed family or social support who is willing to house the Veteran until they enter stable housing?
- If the Veteran is traveling to the arrival community prior to their scheduled permanent housing move in date is there a plan to assist the Veteran in accessing GPD or short-term EHA? If so, please identify the plan to transition the Veteran to permanent housing from GPD or EHA
- SSVF may approve Returning Home Veterans to utilize EHA funds in the arrival community on a case-by-case basis only when a permanent housing plan is in place and GPD is not available. These plans must be approved by SSVF prior to the Veteran's departure.
- Please provide a list of anticipated costs with estimated amounts. For example, a one-way plane ticket from Los Angeles, CA to Orlando, FL is \$144.00 (source: <https://cpsearch.fas.gsa.gov/cpsearch/search.do>)