Federal Coordination and COVID-19 Response

May 14, 2020

Link to Audio
WEBINAR FORMAT

• Webinar will last approximately 45 minutes
• Participants’ phone connections are “muted” due to the high number of callers
• Questions can also be submitted anytime to SSVF@va.gov
Submit questions and comments via the Questions panel
I. Welcome
II. Overview of SSVF COVID-19 Response
III. VA Resources and Priorities
IV. HUD Resources and Priorities
V. USICH Convening Role
VI. Moving Forward
OUR PARTNERS

• Jill Albanese, SSVF
• Eileen Devine, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans
• Abby Miller, HUD Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs
• Helene Schneider, USICH
Jill Albanese, LCSW
Deputy Director
Supportive Services for Veteran Families
Overview of SSVF in the COVID-19 Response Efforts

• SSVF continues to respond to the crisis by using EHA to move Veterans quickly into safe environments.

• During the COVID-19 pandemic, SSVF providers continue to serve existing caseloads and check in on Veterans who have been exited to ensure housing stability continues.

• Supplemental CARES Act funding and increased flexibility around EHA and prevention have provided an opportunity to serve more Veterans than ever before.

• Communication with VAMC and community partners is more important than ever.

• Connections with new partners may need to be established to reach all eligible Veterans.
Coordinating with VAMCs and Coordinated Entry Specialists During the COVID-19 Crisis

Eileen Devine, VA HCHV National Program Director
Role of CES in the COVID-19 Response Efforts

• Now more than ever, a sense of urgency, innovation and adaptation is essential to preventing and ending homelessness amongst Veterans.

• During the COVID-19 pandemic, coordinating quick access to housing is more important than ever.

• Coordinated entry is the “command center” or “hub” of this coordination effort in communities as they respond the COVID-19 crisis.

• This is not business as usual and is an opportunity to improve and transform CES across the country.

• CE Specialists can assist SSVF grantees in making connections to the VAMC.
Maximizing COVID-19 VA Resources

• CARES Act Funding for GPD and HCHV CRS:
  • Connect with your coordinated entry specialist or VAMC POC to learn about how they plan to use this additional funding.
  • Help them plan by providing input.
  • Coordinate resources and avoid duplication of services.

• Educate VAMC POCs on CARES Act Funding for SSVF:
  • Ensure that VA partners know exactly what this means for the collective community COVID-19 response efforts.
  • How can they help you utilize these funds quickly and efficiently?
  • What specifically do you need from them in this partnership?
  • Who else in the VAMC system should know about this resource and how can they assist with this in-reach effort?
Action Steps to Consider

- Communicate more now than ever before
- Remove constraints
- Bypass or remove steps that slow down the system
- Streamline where possible
- Collect information, but ensure it is essential information
- Be creative in how you coordinate activities and continue to communicate and be flexible when thinking about the roles each person/organization serves
- Don’t make assumptions, ask questions, assume goodwill
Abby Miller
Senior Program Specialist
HUD Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS)
COVID-19 & HOMELESSNESS

- Homeless crisis furthered by danger of COVID-19
- People experiencing homelessness at greater risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19
  - Pre-existing and persistent health conditions
  - Congregate and unsheltered settings
- Disparities in Access and Referrals
- Screening guidance evolving in real time
SYSTEM RESPONSES TO COVID-19

- CoC, public health and community partnerships key
- Focus on immediate safety needs of population
- Building systems to work and support remotely
- Creative exit and diversion strategies to ensure safety
- Pivot to rehousing strategy and long term view
HUD CARES ACT RESOURCES

- CARES Act provided $4 billion to Emergency Solutions Grant program
  - Rehousing Strategy a priority for HUD
  - Opportunities for Prevention, Diversion and Shelter support
- Emphasizing the need for coordinated development of a rehousing strategy and investment plan to maximize impact
- “Megawaiver” allowing some regulatory relief for HUD projects
- CoCs and SSVF/VA partners to work together on Veteran population
A RAPIDLY CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

- Remote approaches to support clients and staff
- Resources to be coordinated across HUD, VA, FEMA, etc.
- Robust and creative landlord engagement strategies – always an eye to permanent housing
- Coordinated Entry changes that meet the moment and expedite connections to services and housing
- Ensure equity considerations throughout planning and service delivery
COORDINATION OF HUD AND VA FUNDED PROGRAMS

- Best outcomes when SSVF and CoC are closely coordinate
  - Regular communication
  - Clear referral processes
  - SSVF participation in the broader homeless system
- Encourage SSVF to reach out to CoC to learn about COVID-19 response including non-congregate shelter and rehousing strategies
- Coordinated entry will be the linchpin for all the new resources
Coordinating Across Federal Partners During the COVID-19 Crisis

SSVF National Webinar

May 13, 2020
USICH Presenter

Helene Schneider
National Initiatives Team
United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

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Coordinating the Federal Response

- The Council
- Council Policy Group
- Interagency Working Groups
- Performance measurement and accountability
National PIT Data on Veterans Experiencing Homelessness
2010-2019

From HUD Point-in-Time Data

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Maximizing COVID-19 Resources

• Strengthening Partnerships
  • Securing Non-Congregate Shelter/Motel Sites
  • Connecting with CoC Grantees
  • Communicating with County & City leaders
  • Recruiting New Property Owners & Landlords

• Leveraging Financial Support
  • Knowing & understanding federal, state & local funding opportunities, regulations & how each source interacts with the others
  • Link: COVID-19 Funding, Flexibilities & Waivers
Planning for Post COVID-19

- Create exit strategies from motels into housing
- Participate in the Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness
78 communities and 3 states have achieved the Federal Criteria & Benchmarks for Effectively Ending Veteran Homelessness

See [https://www.usich.gov/communities-that-have-ended-homelessness](https://www.usich.gov/communities-that-have-ended-homelessness) for latest status
Federal Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness

• Developed by federal partners (USICH, VA, HUD)
• Represent a minimum standard to achieve success within a defined period, but goal is ongoing assessment and improvement even once confirmed
• May be periodically updated (most recently in June 2019)
• Key Updates included in Version 4 (June 2019) are:
  • Consolidating information, specifications, and clarifications to make it easier to review and understand all of the information holistically.
  • Providing clarification on the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program models and how those programs, and Veterans staying with them, are considered within the criteria and benchmarks.
Connect with your USICH Regional Coordinator

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Helpful Tools and Information

- **Criteria and Benchmarks for Effectively Ending Veteran Homelessness**
- **Master List Template and Benchmark Generation Tool**, developed by HUD and its partners, to help you manage your active list and calculate the benchmarks
- **The Transformation of VA Grant and Per Diem Programs: Considerations for Communities**
- **Sustaining an End to Veteran Homelessness: Strategies for Institutionalizing Your Progress**
- **Case studies** from communities that have achieved the goal
- **Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness**
- **SSVF Program Webpage**
- **GPD Program webpage**
- **Homelessness in America: Focus on Veterans**
Please Stay Connected

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• HUD primary focus on rehousing
• VA initial focus on emergency housing and then rehousing

• VA and HUD committed to ongoing communication and coordination to align efforts
• Technical Assistance provided in variety of ways and methods
• Ongoing evolution and strengthening of federal partnerships
Questions?
THANK YOU!