

SSVF and VA Homeless Program Hotel/Motel Case Conferencing and COVID-19

SSVF's mission is to rapidly place Veterans in permanent housing. Stays in emergency housing, such as hotels/motels should be only as long as necessary to ensure safety prior to placement in permanent housing. Case conferencing is a critical tool in supporting this effort.

Case conferencing works in tandem with a community's by-name list, hotel/motel management information and other relevant data sources to ensure a community is tracking, engaging, and connecting all Veterans experiencing homelessness, including those in temporary hotel and motel accommodations, to permanent housing. **Effective case conferencing has always been a critical activity for local Veteran providers, but this is especially true now given the COVID-19 public health crisis and VA's broad use of hotels and motels to provide emergency housing for vulnerable Veterans.**

Case conferencing is strongly encouraged for all clients, but it is particularly important when Veterans require high levels of supports and/or are likely to reside, without significant efforts, in the hotel or motel for more than 45 days. While SSVF's limit of 45 days for Emergency Housing Placements (EHA) is currently waived under the Stafford Act, the expectation is that all Veterans are moving toward housing solutions within that timeframe or are actively engaged in plans about other options that best suit their needs and desires. Please visit the [SSVF Website](#) for more information and related guidance about SSVF coordination and flexibilities with HUD-VASH, Grant & Per Diem and other COVID-19 flexibilities and supports.

During case conferencing it is important to keep your primary focus on reviewing the Veterans on your list with the greatest barriers to rapid placement in permanent housing and/or those who have been resistant to moving out of the hotel or motel situation. Below are considerations for which Veterans to review during a case conference meeting (these should be adapted based on local needs or conditions):

- **Veterans with longest time in hotel/motel setting**, particularly those with no clear housing pathway.
- **Veterans who are eligible for, or enrolled in HUD-VASH, and co-enrolled in SSVF or GPD** but have not yet identified a housing unit or clear path toward lease up and move in.
- **Veterans with the longest lengths** of time homeless overall.
- **Veterans with barriers** that could impact their ability to obtain housing. Although Veterans cannot be prioritized solely based on identification as part of a historically underserved or disenfranchised population, discussions should also be had about possible barriers related to institutional racism and discrimination.
- **Veterans with most significant vulnerabilities to COVID-19.** Review Veterans who have the greatest physical or mental health vulnerabilities even in hotel or motel settings.

Hotel/Motel Case Conferencing Data Points to Watch

Managing data relevant to emergency housing placements should rely on the communities' by-Name List, which should be a comprehensive account of all Veterans experiencing homelessness and their pathways toward obtaining permanent housing. In some instances, local practitioners may choose to use a hotel/motel tracking list or create a way to sort their broader By-name List to focus more specifically on those Veterans residing temporarily in hotel and motels. The following are specific data points that you may need to have available in order to prioritize which Veterans need case conferencing review :

- Length of time homeless
- Length of time in hotel/motel setting
- Timeline for identified housing pathway
- Race, ethnicity, age and other demographic information
- VA Homeless Program Eligibility
- SSVF Case Manager
- HUD-VASH / GPD Case Manager
- Notes on housing progress, barriers and next steps

Key Case Conferencing Personnel

In order to use finite Case Conferencing time to facilitate actual housing outcomes for Veterans, you must have the right people participating to support the collective brainstorming and work to reach that goal. The following people/roles must be active participants in the Case Conferencing Process:

- SSVF Case Manager(s)
- SSVF Housing Navigators
- HUD-VASH Case Manager(s)
- GPD Case Manager(s)
- VA Coordinated Entry Specialist
- SSVF Health Care Navigator
- Local CoC and Coordinated Entry Specialist(s)

The following guidance was released by the SSVF Program Office in March 2016 as a general [Case Conferencing Overview](#)

Broader Case Conferencing Guidance and Considerations for the Community

- **Meeting Attendees and Format:** Organize meetings to ensure key service and housing partners are actively involved and dialogue is focused on case coordination and problem-solving.
- **Organizations that Need to be Represented:** Consider which organizations should be represented in case conference meetings based on who serves Veterans in your community – this may be a mix of SSVF, Veteran/Peer support groups, street outreach, emergency shelter/HCHV providers, transitional housing/GPD providers, local VA/CRRC staff, HUD-VASH, PSH programs, community advocacy groups, and local CoC staff.
- **Attendees:** Work with your stakeholders to determine which specific staff should be present at case conference meetings. Ideal attendees are those who have in-depth knowledge about the status, needs and preferences of each Veteran being reviewed and who are also able to make decisions regarding provision of shelter, services, or housing assistance. Case managers must make every effort to involve Veterans in the development of their housing case plans prior to case conferencing meetings so that Veterans can express their preferences and engage in problem-solving.
- **Medium of Meeting:** Some communities can easily convene in-person and others may require some of the work to be done by phone or video conferencing. If you do need to use conference calls, make sure the facilitator calls on each attendee to ensure comprehensive participation and system coverage. Adjustments to the meeting medium may need to be made because of the pandemic.
- **Standard Meeting Agenda:** Keep the standard case conference agenda simple and to the point. Remember, the primary focus of case conference meetings are the individual Veterans who are being discussed. A simple agenda might include the following items:
 - *Welcome & Introductions*
 - *Key System Updates:* Be sure to keep these brief and include any critical system indicators, such as average length of time for all Veterans to access housing.
 - *Case Conferencing:* Veteran-specific updates and discussion. See below for example review format.
 - *Follow Up Items:* General, non-Veteran specific follow-up or action items identified during the meeting.
- **Meeting Frequency:** Case conferencing frequency depends on various factors, such as those outlined here. Generally, meetings should occur weekly, but certainly no less than monthly with additional meetings as needed.

Client-Level Review: Consider creating a standard set of elements to review for each Veteran so providers can be prepared to effectively discuss cases. Below are suggested elements to review:

- **Current status:** For example: active in shelter, active unsheltered, missing and whether that status has changed since the last case conference review
- **Veteran Preferences:** Housing plans and next steps should be guided by the Veteran's preferences.
- **Critical Housing Placement Barriers:** Review and problem-solve any barriers to housing placement.
- **Critical Service Barriers:** Review and problem-solve any challenges to connecting Veterans to critical services.
- **Current Safety:** Make sure any unsheltered Veteran has a safe place to stay tonight and in the near term.
- **Next Steps:** Identify any immediate or critical action items related to the Veteran, including roles and timelines. This should include, wherever possible, identified resources and linkages for individual Veteran households such as RRH assistance, HUD-VASH, voucher or PSH options, Rapid Resolution services, Returning Home services, etc.

Meeting Facilitation and Management

Case Conference Management & Facilitation

- **Facilitator Role:** Be deliberate about who you appoint to lead case conference meetings. The person in this role will ideally be able to keep the group on task while facilitating solution-based discussions.
- **Targeted Inquiries:** The person facilitating the meeting should ask probing but respectful questions to promote efficient coordination among providers, appropriate shelter and emergency services, and rapid housing placement. For example: "It looks like the Veteran signed a lease last month, but is still staying in a shelter. Is there anything this group can do to help expedite move-in?"
- **Ongoing Adjustments:** Foster the group dynamic by asking for feedback during meetings, by email or through an alternative medium to share.

Facilitator Duties

- **Prepare for Each Meeting:** Meeting preparation may entail collecting each participating provider's client-level updates prior to the meeting; updating the By-name List; disseminating the By-name List and updates to the group prior to the meeting; and clarifying which Veterans will be discussed at the upcoming meeting.
- **By-name List Organization:** The facilitator may consider organizing the By-name List by priority (Veterans with longest lengths of time homeless, those without housing plans in place, etc.) instead of by program to help demonstrate system-wide ownership and allow different partners to engage in the case conference process.
- **Set a Deadline for Updates to the List:** The deadline for updates to the By-name List, specifically for Veterans who will be discussed at the next meeting, should be set in advance of the meeting so that the group can discuss the most current information available. Remember to take confidentiality into account when determining updates to the List and distribute it to the participating organizations.
- **Communication of Members' Roles:** It is vital that participating group members also prepare for each case conference meeting by submitting Veteran updates to the facilitator by the agreed upon deadline, and sending the appropriate staff to meetings who work with the specific Veterans being discussed.
- **Accountability:** The facilitator should establish action steps with assigned roles and responsibilities at the conclusion of each meeting. This helps ensure accountability and progress.
- **Celebrate Success!** Community efforts to end homelessness among Veterans are hard work. Facilitators should help the group celebrate success – from both the client and system levels – whenever possible.