U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Veterans Program

Ending and Preventing Homelessness Among Veterans, Community By Community

Get Involved Booklet
More resources available at
www.va.gov/homeless/get_involved.asp

Help for Homeless Veterans
877-4AID-VET
va.gov/homeless | (877) 424-3838

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the White House and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) declared their commitment to end and prevent Veteran homelessness. Communities throughout the nation have made tremendous progress since then. States and localities are developing systems to move every identified Veteran who is in need and is willing to accept help into permanent housing. The national picture is also improved—the most recent "snapshot" of homelessness on a given night in America shows that homelessness among Veterans has declined significantly.

As Americans, we can see that it's possible to end homelessness among Veterans, and we must not let up until all Veterans have access to permanent housing, employment opportunities and other services and supports.

Every community can play a role. Use this booklet to learn what VA and its partners are doing to end and prevent homelessness and get involved. For more information and resources, visit *www.va.gov/homeless* and *www.va.gov/homeless/get_involved.asp.*

ASSISTING HOMELESS AND AT-RISK VETERANS

VA and its federal and community partners strive to meet the needs of Veterans by providing services that help them secure permanent housing and achieve their full potential.

This comprehensive continuum of housing solutions, supportive services, community employment and health care has an enormous impact.

However, no one entity or program can end and prevent homelessness among Veterans alone.

COLLABORATING TO DO MORE

That's why collaborative community efforts are needed to address the many causes of homelessness and other challenges that lead to housing instability.

Community-based allies can leverage the following VA resources—and their own assets—to expand Veterans' access to affordable housing, meaningful employment, household items, transportation resources and other services.

Together, we can end and prevent homelessness among Veterans.

Key Resources

in Ending and Preventing Homelessness Among Veterans

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT-VA SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (HUD-VASH)

Rental assistance plus supportive services equals housing success for Veterans. That sums up HUD-VASH, a program combining HUD housing vouchers with VA supportive services to help Veterans who are homeless, and their families, find and sustain permanent housing.

Through local public housing authorities, HUD provides eligible homeless Veterans with vouchers for privately owned housing. VA case managers provide these Veterans with supportive services to help them maintain housing in the community.

More Information:
www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES (SSVF)

For very low-income Veterans, SSVF provides case management and supportive services to prevent the imminent loss of a Veteran's home or identify a new housing situation for the individual and his or her family.

More Information:
www.va.gov/homeless/SSVF.asp

HOMELESS VETERAN COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (HVCES)

Employment is a key element in helping Veterans transition permanently out of homelessness or avoid it altogether. And it's now easier than ever for business and industry to find, interview and hire job-ready Veterans exiting homelessness.

That's because VA has deployed more than 150 community employment coordinators (CECs), based at most VA Medical Centers across the country, to collaborate with employers ready to hire Veterans exiting homelessness. CECs can be recruiters' connection to potential Veteran new hires for jobs in a wide variety of sectors.

More Information:
www.va.gov/homeless/employment_programs.asp

HEALTH CARE FOR HOMELESS VETERANS (HCHV)

How does VA reach and serve Veterans who are homeless or at risk? Largely through the HCHV program, which uses outreach, case management and residential treatment services to help Veterans move to stable housing.

HCHV staff are clinically trained specialists—also based at most VA Medical Centers—who partner with the community to locate Veterans living in unsafe situations and connect them with VA services, including a safe place to stay, health care and case management.

More Information:
www.va.gov/homeless/hchv.asp

HOMELESS PROVIDERS GRANT AND PER DIEM (GPD) PROGRAM

The GPD program is an important tool in ending Veteran homelessness because it gives communities a way to provide homeless Veterans with temporary housing and supportive services until they can move to permanent housing.

VA funds an estimated 600 agencies that provide over 14,500 beds—including short-stay bridge housing—for eligible Veterans. Grantees work closely with VA Medical Center staff and collaborate with community-based organizations to connect Veterans with employment, housing and additional social services to promote housing stability.

More Information:
www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp

VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH (VJO) AND HEALTH CARE FOR REENTRY VETERANS (HCRV) PROGRAMS

Veterans with a history of legal and justice involvement can face severely limited housing options, which can perpetuate homelessness.

To help communities address these issues, VA created VJO and HCRV. VJO aims to prevent homelessness by helping justice-involved Veterans who have mental health, substance use and other clinical issues get access to services and community resources. HCRV specialists work with Veterans to ease their transition from prison back into the community. Find these specialists at just about every VA Medical Center. (Note that VA cannot provide legal services to Veterans.)

More Information:
VJO: www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp
HCRV: www.va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp

LEARN MORE

- Get more detailed information about VA's programs for Veterans who are homeless or at risk at *www.va.gov/homeless.*
- Ask specific questions about how to get involved in ending and preventing homelessness among Veterans by emailing VA's homeless Veterans' outreach team at *HomelessVets@va.gov*.
- If you encounter Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless, encourage them to call or visit their local VA Medical Center *(www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp)*, where VA staff are ready to assist. Veterans and their families can also access VA services by calling **1-877-4AID-VET** (1-877-424-3838).

10 *Ways To Get Involved in Ending and Preventing Homelessness*

The company that hires a formerly homeless Veteran. The landlord who accepts her housing voucher. The faith-based group that helps furnish her new apartment. The foundation that shores up her finances. And the civic group that pays a visit to welcome her home.

These are just a few ways that community-based organizations provide a fresh start to Veterans who are exiting homelessness. These collaborators are essential to the nation's success in making sure every Veteran has a permanent home.

Communities across the United States count on the support of organizations of all types—businesses, nonprofit service providers, foundations and so many others—to help Veterans who are homeless, or one tough break away from it, secure meaningful employment, affordable housing, move-in essentials and more. Here are 10 community-based efforts that can get us closer to the day when no Veteran is without a place to call home.

1 BOOST ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Encourage property owners and landlords to house Veterans exiting homelessness, whether or not they're eligible for the Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program and other VA services. Consider incentives (e.g., risk-mitigation funding) to encourage housing providers to get involved.

Aid your efforts with this video, *www.usich.gov/blog/first-lady-michelle-obama-releases-video-encouraging-landlords*, and these resources, *www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/engaging-landlords-risk-mitigation-funds-community-profiles.*

2 COORDINATE HOUSING EFFORTS

Pool resources and staff to develop coordinated assessment and entry systems to ensure that there is no wrong door for Veterans seeking help and housing.

Identify all Veterans experiencing homelessness by name and share that list across systems so that no one falls through the cracks. Guide your efforts with resources at *www.va.gov/homeless/USICH benchmarking.asp.*

3 HELP VETERANS NAVIGATE HOUSING OPTIONS

Take a page from New Orleans—the first city to achieve an effective end to Veteran homelessness on Jan. 2, 2015—and pair Veterans with housing navigators.

These dedicated staff and peer support professionals help Veterans define which housing and other services they need, fill out paperwork and complete other complex tasks to promote the rapid transition to permanent housing. Learn more by viewing this toolkit at *www.va.gov/homeless/nchav/research/Navigator_Toolkit%20PDF.pdf.*

4 COLLECT AND DISTRIBUTE MOVE-IN ESSENTIALS

Veterans exiting homelessness often need mattresses, household items and other costly supplies to make their new house or apartment feel like home.

Check with VA Voluntary Service *(www.volunteer.va.gov)* and the local homeless coordinator to see if there are specific ways to help.

5 SUPPORT MOVE-IN COSTS

Even Veterans who have located a permanent home may be one security deposit or rental fee away from being able to move in. Work with community partners who have programs that raise funds to help Veterans secure their first and last months' rent and security deposits so they can exit homelessness as quickly as possible.

6 PROMOTE VETERAN EMPLOYMENT

Employers can work with VA community employment coordinators (CECs)—based at nearly every VA Medical Center—to share position openings and set up interviews with qualified Veterans. CECs pre-screen Veterans who have a wide variety of skill sets and all levels of education to facilitate hiring and onboarding.

Find the nearest CEC online at *www.va.gov/homeless/cec-contacts.asp.* Other agencies can promote Veteran employment. Collaborate with workforce investment boards, faith-based groups, homelessness services, housing organizations, VA Medical Centers and employers to help Veterans develop résumés, polish interviewing skills and access job opportunities.

7 SHARE LEGAL SERVICES INFORMATION

Expanding Veterans' access to free and low-cost legal services can be a critical way to end and prevent homelessness among Veterans.

Here are a few ways to help:

- Share videos about how legal services professionals can assist Veterans at *www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKbu5C1tx2w* and *www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGVpwfcGufU.*
- Visit VA's Legal Help for Veterans page *(www.va.gov/OGC/LegalServices.asp)* to find out if a pro bono Veterans' legal clinic exists in your community, locate a VJO specialist and identify other resources.

8 EXPAND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Transportation services help Veterans keep stable housing. Transportation links Veterans to steady work, regular health care and support services vital to success in housing.

Directly or in partnership with others, many states and communities provide discounted or free transit trips for Veterans. Veterans service organizations and nonprofits may offer discounted or free bus and train passes for Veterans. Ridesharing and bike sharing are other options to get Veterans where they need to go.

For more ideas and resources, view the fact sheet at *www.va.gov/homeless/docs/Transportation_Programs_FactSheet.pdf.*

9 PARTICIPATE IN A STAND DOWN

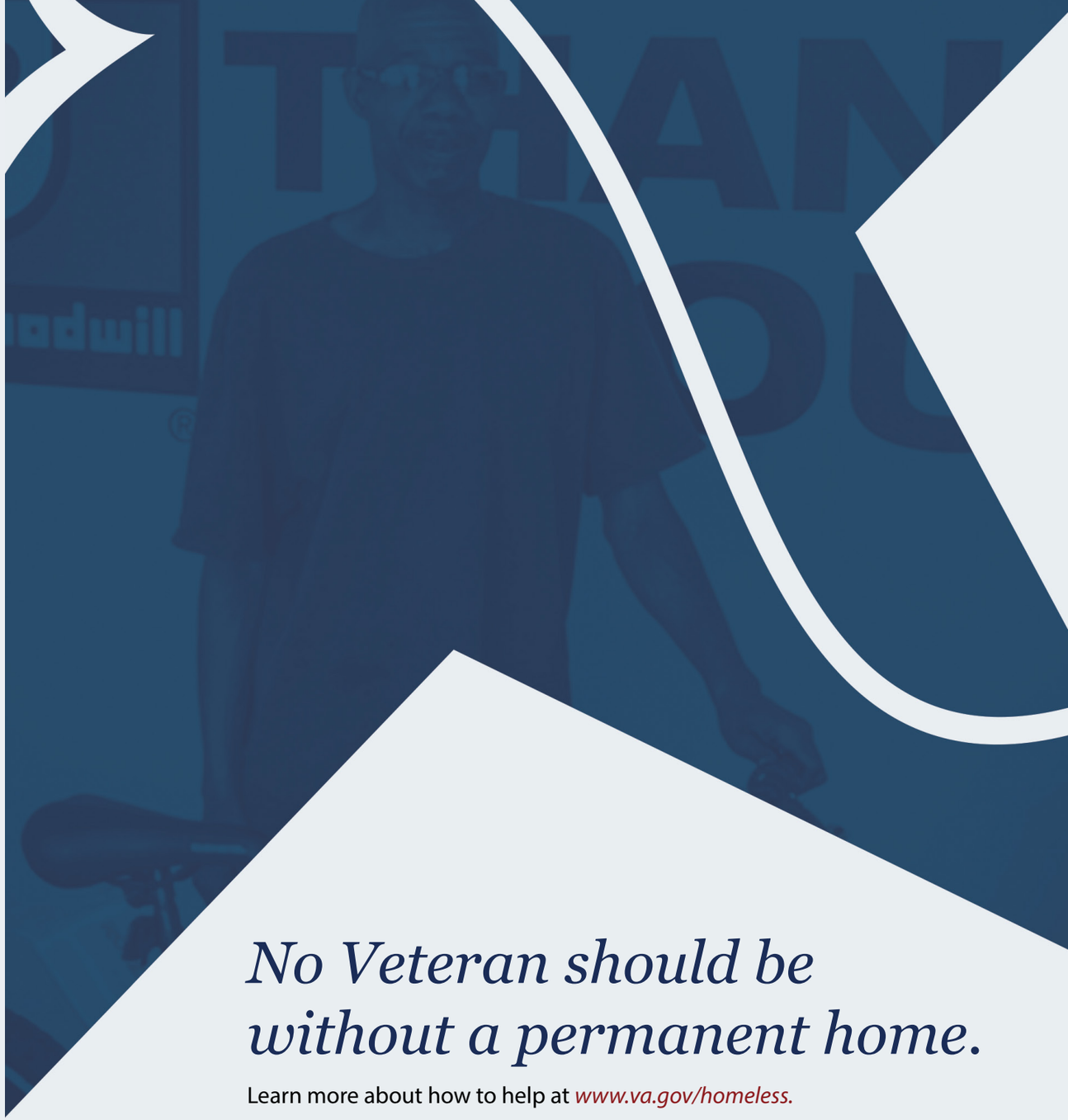
Stand Downs are outreach events where Veterans can get access to immediate, on-site services and VA health care and benefits. They are local, collaborative events, coordinated among local VA Medical Centers, other government agencies and community-based service providers.

Contact your local VA Medical Center *(www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp)* to sponsor or participate in a Stand Down.

10 TAKE THE CHALLENGE

VA needs your input in a planning process called Project CHALENG (**C**ommunity **H**omelessness **A**ssessment, **L**ocal **E**ducation and **N**etworking **G**roups). This ongoing assessment unites homeless service providers, advocates, Veterans and citizens toward the goal of identifying and meeting the evolving needs of Veterans who are homeless.

Visit *www.va.gov/homeless/chaleng.asp* to take up the CHALENG today.



No Veteran should be without a permanent home.

Learn more about how to help at *www.va.gov/homeless.*