



Identifying & Referring Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

The Obama Administration is committed to achieving an end to homelessness among Veterans, and connecting Veterans experiencing or at-risk of homelessness to housing and services to help them obtain permanent housing. Achieving this goal requires an all-of-community response in which VA Medical Centers, homeless services organizations/Continuums of Care, health care providers, law enforcement, and other community-based organizations work together to identify Veterans experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and refer them to assistance that can help them obtain permanent housing.

This guide provides useful information for homeless services organizations, shelter providers, and other community partners on how to connect Veterans experiencing or at-risk of homelessness to appropriate housing and services. Specifically, this document serves to provide guidance on how to:

- ★ Identify Veteran status among people experiencing homelessness.
- ★ Assess whether a Veteran is experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.
- ★ Identify what type of assistance is needed by a Veteran experiencing homelessness.
- ★ Refer Veterans for homelessness assistance.

Identifying Veteran Status

The Administration is committed to ending homelessness for all Veterans, regardless of their discharge status. This includes all persons who served on active duty in the armed forces, regardless of the type of discharge they received. Communities can identify whether someone is a Veteran by asking two basic questions:

- ★ Has the individual ever served in the military?
- ★ Has the individual ever accessed or used VA services (not limited to homeless programs)?

However, Veterans with certain discharge status types may qualify for special VA programs and services. Once a person is identified as a Veteran, communities can work with VA staff to ascertain the person's discharge status and eligibility for VA programs and services. See 'How to Refer Veterans to Homeless Assistance' below for information on how to connect to VA staff.

Assessing Housing Status/Homelessness

The definition of homelessness includes anyone that has a residence not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation or their residence is a shelter designated to provide a temporary living arrangement. The following questions can be used in an initial screening to assess whether a Veteran is in need of homelessness assistance:

- ★ In the past two months, has the individual been living in stable housing that they own, rent, or stay in as part of a household?
- ★ Is the individual worried or concerned that in two months they may NOT have stable housing that they can own, rent, or stay in as part of a household?
- ★ Where has the individual lived for MOST of the past two months?
- ★ Would the individual like to be referred to talk more about their housing situation?



Types of Assistance Available to Veterans

A wide array of services and programs are available to help Veterans resolve their homelessness and achieve housing stability, improved health, and achieve economic success. These programs provide different types of assistance tailored to the varying needs of Veterans. While VA staff and community-based services organizations are best suited to help determine what types of help is most appropriate, it is helpful to have a basic knowledge of what types of help are available. The following programs represent just a subset of the programs available to Veterans experiencing or at-risk of homelessness:

The Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) HUD-VASH is a collaborative program between HUD and VA where eligible homeless Veterans receive a Housing Choice rental voucher from HUD, paired with VA providing case management and supportive services to sustain housing stability and recovery from physical and mental health problems, substance use disorders, and functional concerns contributing to or resulting from homelessness. HUD-VASH subscribes to the principles of the Housing First model of care. Program goals include housing stability while promoting maximum Veteran recovery and independence in the community for the Veteran and the Veteran's family.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) The SSVF program provides time-limited financial assistance and case management services to help homeless Veterans and their families rapidly return to housing or helps them stay in their homes if they are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. The program is funded by and overseen by VA and operated by community-based, nonprofit organizations.

Grant and Per Diem Program (GDP) VA's GDP provides short-term or transitional housing to Veterans experiencing homelessness. During their stay, Veterans are provided with services related to substance use disorders, life skills, and/or employment in preparation for independent living.

Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program VA provides a myriad of housing and other services to assist Veterans experiencing homelessness to access treatment and rehabilitative services, including community based residential treatment. HCHV services include outreach, assessment and treatment, referrals, and case management to homeless Veterans at more than 135 sites.

Continuum of Care (CoC) Program A wide array of homelessness assistance is funded by HUD's Continuum of Care Program. HUD grants funds to local collaborations of nonprofit providers and State and local governments to provide permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, transitional housing, and other services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness, including Veterans. These programs are able to serve Veterans who do not qualify for VA's programs and services.

How to Refer Veterans to Homeless Assistance

If a Veteran in your community is experiencing or at risk of homelessness, there are a variety of ways to refer them to help. The three best starting points are the following:

- ★ **HCHV Homeless Coordinators** http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/HCHV_Sites_ByState.pdf
- ★ **VA's National Call Center** 1-877-4AID VET (1-877-424-3838)
- ★ **Contact CoC's** <https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees/?granteesaction=main.searchresults&programid=3>

This guide was created in collaboration between the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. For additional information and strategies to end Veterans homelessness, reference [10 Strategies to End Veterans Homelessness](#).