



Department of
Veterans Affairs

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Fact Sheet

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VA Programs for Homeless Veterans

Less than 15 percent of all homeless adults in the United States are Veterans. VA's efforts have contributed to a significant reduction in the numbers of homeless Veterans. *Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress* estimates that on any given night 75,609 Veterans were homeless. An estimated 149,635 Veterans spent at least one night in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program over the course of the year. Many other Veterans are considered at risk because of poverty, lack of support from family and friends and precarious living conditions in overcrowded or substandard housing.

Ninety-four percent of homeless Veterans who receive VA services are male and most are single. About half of these Veterans suffer from mental illness and more than two-thirds suffer from alcohol or drug use problems. Nearly 40 percent have both psychiatric and substance use disorders.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the only federal agency that provides substantial hands-on assistance directly to homeless Veterans. Each year, VA provides health care to almost 150,000 homeless Veterans and other services to over 112,000 Veterans through its specialized homeless programs. More than 40,000 homeless Veterans receive compensation or pension benefits monthly. Although limited to Veterans and their dependents, VA's major homeless programs constitute the largest integrated network of homeless assistance programs in the country, offering a wide array of services to help Veterans recover from homelessness and live as self-sufficiently and independently as possible.

VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV) provides homeless Veterans or Veterans at-risk for homelessness with 24/7 access to trained responders. The NCCHV is intended to assist homeless Veterans and their families, VA programs, Department of Defense (DOD), and other federal, state and local partners, and community agencies. Since its inception in March 2010, the NCCHV has assisted over 38,000 Veterans, more than 23,000 Veterans at risk, and linked over 25,000 Veterans to VA homeless programs nationwide. To reach trained VA staff members, call 1-877-4AID VET (or 1-877-424-3838).

VA, using its own resources or in partnerships with others, has secured nearly 15,000 residential rehabilitative and transitional beds and an additional 30,000 permanent beds for homeless Veterans throughout the nation. In fiscal year 2011, VA expects to spend \$3.4 billion to provide health care and \$800 million in specialized homeless programs.

VA social workers and clinicians work with community and faith-based partners to conduct extensive outreach programs, clinical assessments, medical treatments, alcohol and drug abuse counseling and employment assistance.

A total of 20,184 Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND) have been identified as homeless by VA during the past five years. The number of homeless Veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan is increasing; but constitutes 5.5 percent of the overall homeless population.

VA has awarded more than 700 grants to public and nonprofit groups to assist homeless Veterans in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and tribal lands to provide transitional housing, service centers and vans to provide outreach and transportation to services for homeless Veterans.

VA sponsors and supports national, regional and local homeless conferences and meetings, bringing together thousands of homeless providers and advocates to discuss community planning strategies and to provide technical assistance in such areas as transitional housing, mental health and family services, education and employment opportunities for the homeless.

Homeless Programs

VA's Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program operates at 135 sites, where extensive outreach, physical and psychiatric health exams, treatment, referrals and ongoing case management are provided to homeless Veterans with mental health problems, including substance abuse. This program makes assessments and referrals for more than 40,000 Veterans annually. In FY 2010, HCHV teams conducted 42,371 initial clinical assessments of Veterans nationally. This represents an increase in initial clinical assessments of approximately 5 percent from FY 2009 (40,216) and FY 2008 (40,422). At the end of the second quarter of FY 2011, HCHV teams had conducted 21,404 initial clinical assessments of Veterans nationally.

In FY 2011, HCHV expanded its Contract Residential Treatment Program. This program places a priority on services to homeless Veterans transitioning from street homelessness, those being discharged from institutions, and Veterans who recently became homeless. Through the end of the second quarter of FY 2011, increased funding levels have enabled HCHV to add 512 new transitional and emergency housing beds, a 25 percent increase in operational capacity from FY 2010.

The Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program provides grants and per diem payments to help public and nonprofit organizations establish and operate new supportive housing and service centers for homeless Veterans. Grant funds may also be used to purchase vans to conduct outreach or provide transportation for homeless Veterans. Since the program's inception in fiscal year 1994, VA has awarded more than 700 grants to faith- and community-based service providers, state or local government agencies in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and on

Native American tribal lands. Up to 20,000 homeless Veterans are expected to receive supported housing under this program annually in nearly 14,000 operational beds.

VA's Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) Program provides residential care for homeless Veterans. DCHVs provide rehabilitation in a residential setting on VA medical center grounds or in the community to eligible Veterans who have a wide range of problems, illnesses or rehabilitative care needs which can be helped by medical, psychiatric, vocational, educational or social services. Clinical care is provided by interdisciplinary teams in supportive, therapeutic milieus which foster Veterans' functional independence and mutual support. DCHVs provide a 24/7 structured and supportive residential environment as part of the rehabilitative treatment process. There are more than 2,200 beds available through the program at 44 sites. The program provides residential treatment to nearly 7,900 homeless Veterans each year. DCHVs provide outreach and referral; admission screening and assessment; medical and psychiatric evaluation; treatment, vocational counseling and rehabilitation; and post-discharge community support.

HUD-VA Supportive Housing (VASH) Program is a joint effort between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA. HUD provides housing assistance through its Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) that allows homeless Veterans to rent privately owned housing. VA offers eligible homeless Veterans clinical and supportive services through its health care system across the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam.

From FY 2008 through FY 2011, HUD has allocated funding to local public housing authorities to provide over 37,000 Housing Choice Vouchers to homeless Veterans while VA has hired dedicated VA case managers to assist homeless Veterans in securing and maintaining permanent housing through intensive case management.

Acquired Property Sales for Homeless Providers Program makes all the properties VA obtains through foreclosures on VA-insured mortgages available for sale to homeless provider organizations at a discount of 20 to 50 percent to shelter homeless Veterans through its service provider, Bank of America loan servicing. The percentage of discount will vary based on how long the property has been listed for sale.

The Readjustment Counseling Service's Vet Center program's community-based locations and outreach activities are well-suited to identifying and serving homeless combat Veterans, primarily through assessment and referrals for other needed services. Vet Centers also provide readjustment counseling services in homeless shelters and are major players in community stand-down events. Every Vet Center has a homeless Veteran coordinator assigned to make sure services for homeless Veterans are tailored to local needs. Annually, the program's 232 Vet Centers see approximately 170,000 Veterans during nearly 1.2 million visits by Veterans and family members.

Mobile Counseling Centers: A fleet of 50 mobile counseling centers have deployed across the country as part of the Vet Center program. Each vehicle is assigned to one of VA's existing Vet Centers, enabling the center to improve access to counseling by

bringing services closer to Veterans. The 38-foot motor coaches, which have spaces for confidential counseling, carry Vet Center counselors and outreach workers to events and activities that reach Veterans in broad geographic areas.

Compensated Work-Therapy (CWT) and Compensated Work-Therapy/Transitional Residence (TR) Programs: Through its CWT and TR programs, VA offers structured work opportunities and supervised therapeutic housing for at-risk and homeless Veterans with physical, psychiatric and substance abuse disorders. VA contracts with private industry and the public sector for work by these Veterans, who learn new job skills, re-learn successful work habits and regain a sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Veterans are paid for their work and, in turn, pay a program fee that is applied toward maintenance and upkeep of the residence. At the end of FY 2010, there were 635 operational beds across 43 programs. Among the approximately 1,000 Veterans discharged from CWT/TR programs during FY 2010, 85 percent were homeless upon admission, 87 percent had a substance use disorder and 38 percent of Veterans were diagnosed with a serious mental illness (defined as PTSD, other anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, other psychotic disorder, bipolar disorder, major affective disorder and other depressive disorder).

Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Program (HVSEP) provides vocational assistance, job development and placement, and ongoing supports to improve employment outcomes among homeless Veterans and Veterans at-risk of homelessness. In FY2011, medical centers received funding to hire 407 new Homeless Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists (VRS) to provide these services. Utilizing Schedule A Non-Competitive Appointing Authority, these positions were required to be filled by Veterans who are homeless, formerly homeless, or at-risk of homelessness. Vocational and employment services to homeless Veterans will be based on rapid engagement, customized job development and competitive community placement. It is expected that HVSEP will serve approximately 40,000 Veterans annually.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program provides grants and technical assistance to community non-profit organizations to work with Veterans and their families in order to maintain them in their current housing. This national program provides grants to non-profit agencies to provide support services, such as legal aid, rent subsidies, childcare and vocational services. In July 2011, VA awarded grants to 85 community agencies in 40 states and the District of Columbia.

Veterans Homelessness Prevention Demonstration Program (VHPD) is a multi-site, three-year pilot project designed to provide early intervention to recently discharged Veterans and their families to prevent homelessness. Priorities for site selection for this pilot project are in communities where there are high concentrations of returning OEF/OIF Veterans. The selected sites are existing HUD grantees or health care facilities located near MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Fla.; Camp Pendleton in San Diego; Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas; Fort Drum in Watertown, N. Y.; and Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Tacoma, Wash. In addition, VA medical centers in Tampa, San Diego, Dallas, Syracuse, New York; and American Lake in Washington provide case management services.

VA's Substance Use Disorder Treatment Enhancement Initiative provides substance use services in the community in order to assist homeless Veterans obtain and maintain housing, increase access to care, and enhance the opportunity for recovery.

National Center on Homelessness among Veterans: In May 2009, VA established the National Center on Homelessness among Veterans. The mission of the center is to promote recovery-oriented care for Veterans who are homeless or at-risk for homelessness by developing, promoting, and enhancing policy, clinical care research, and education to improve homeless services. The Center is designed to be a national resource for both VA and community partners.

Healthcare for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) Program is designed to address the community reentry needs of incarcerated Veterans. HCRV's goals are to prevent homelessness, reduce the impact of medical, psychiatric, and substance abuse problems upon community readjustment, and decrease the likelihood of reincarceration for those leaving prison.

Veteran Justice Outreach has the goal to avoiding the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among Veterans by ensuring that eligible Veterans involved with the criminal justice system have timely access to VA's mental health and substance use services when clinically indicated, and other VA services and benefits as appropriate.

Homeless Veterans Receive Benefits Assistance is available at VA regional offices by designated staff members who serve as Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators. Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators provide outreach services and help expedite the processing of homeless Veterans' benefits claims. The Homeless Eligibility Clarification Act allows eligible Veterans without a fixed address to receive VA benefits checks at VA regional offices. VA procedures allow for expeditious processing of homeless Veterans' benefits claims. Last year, over 7,700 homeless Veterans had their claims expedited by VA staff members.

VA's National Cemetery Administration and Veterans Health Administration have formed partnerships at national cemeteries, where formerly homeless Veterans from the CWT program have received therapeutic work opportunities while providing VA cemeteries with a supplemental work force.

Stand Downs are one- to three-day events that provide homeless Veterans with a variety of services and allow VA and community-based service providers to reach more homeless Veterans. Stand downs give homeless Veterans a temporary refuge where they can obtain food, shelter, clothing and a range of community and VA assistance. In many locations, stand downs provide health screenings, referral and access to long-term treatment, benefits counseling, ID cards and access to other programs to meet their immediate needs. There were 196 Stand Downs held during 2010 that served 44,325 Veterans and 7,695 family members of Veterans. More than 27,000 volunteers participated in stand down events.

Project CHALENG (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups) for Veterans brings together consumers, providers, advocates, local officials and other concerned citizens to identify the needs of homeless Veterans and work to meet those needs through planning and cooperative action. CHALENG is designed to be an ongoing assessment process that describes the needs of homeless Veterans and identifies the barriers they face to successful community reentry. This process has helped build thousands of relationships with community agencies, Veterans groups, law enforcement agencies, and federal, state and local government. Local CHALENG meetings represent important opportunities for VA and public and private agency representatives to meet and develop meaningful partnerships to better serve homeless Veterans. In a 2010 report, data was compiled from 19,847 respondents, including 13,432 survey responses that were completed by homeless Veterans.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation conducted by the Northeast Program Evaluation Center at the VA Connecticut Health Care System provides important information about the Veterans served and the therapeutic value and cost-effectiveness of VA's specialized homeless programs. Information from these evaluations also helps program managers determine new directions for expanding and improving services to homeless Veterans.

VA's Homeless Veterans Dental Program has been managing a funded initiative that provides dental treatment for eligible Veterans receiving residential service in a number of programs: Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment, VA Grant and Per Diem, Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (contract bed), and Community Residential Care. VA is working to provide dental care to all eligible Veterans within this initiative.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki is a member of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

For more information, visit the VA website at www.va.gov or contact VA's Veterans Homeless Initiative Office at (202) 461-1857, or homelessvets@mail.va.gov

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