



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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Fact Sheet

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VA Programs for Homeless Veterans

One-third of adult homeless men and nearly one-fifth of all homeless adults have served in the armed forces. While there is no true measure of the number of homeless Veterans, it has been estimated that 107,000 Veterans may be homeless on a typical night and that twice as many Veterans experience homelessness during a 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 abuse disorders.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the only federal agency that provides substantial hands-on assistance directly to homeless Veterans. VA provides health care to more than 100,000 homeless Veterans and other services to over 132,000 Veterans in its specialized homeless programs. More than 40,000 homeless Veterans receive compensation or pension benefits annually. 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. Nearly three-quarters of homeless Veterans we have contacted use VA health care and 55 percent have used VA homeless services

VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans provides homeless Veterans or Veterans at-risk for homelessness with free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. The hotline is intended to assist homeless Veterans and their families, VA Medical Centers, federal, state and local partners, community agencies, service providers and others in the community. To be connected with trained VA staff members, call 1-877-4AID VET (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 14,406 Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Veterans have been seen in VA homeless outreach during the past five fiscal years. The number of homeless Veterans reporting OEF/OIF service is increasing; but constitutes 5 percentage of the overall homeless population.

VA has awarded nearly 600 grants to public and nonprofit groups to assist homeless Veterans in almost every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and tribal lands to provide transitional housing, service centers and vans to provide transportation to services and employment.

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 Program operates at 132 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.

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 nearly 600 grants to faith- and community-based service providers, state or local government agencies in 49 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and on Native American tribal governments. Up to 20,000 homeless Veterans are expected to receive supported housing under this program annually in more than 12,000 operational beds.

VA's Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) Program. The DCHV 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, illness or rehabilitative care needs which can be medical, psychiatric, vocational, educational or social. Clinical care is provided by an interdisciplinary team in supportive, therapeutic milieu which fosters Veterans' functional independence and mutual support. DCHVs provide a 24/7 structured and supportive residential environment as part of the rehabilitative treatment regime. There are more than 2,100 beds available through the program at 41 sites. The program provides residential treatment to nearly 6,000 homeless Veterans each year. The domiciliaries conduct outreach and referral; admission screening and assessment; medical and psychiatric evaluation; treatment, vocational counseling and rehabilitation; and post-discharge community support.

HUD-VA Supported Housing (VASH) Program. The Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA have allocated \$75 million each year to local public housing authorities to provide permanent supportive housing and dedicated VA case

managers for an estimated 30,000 homeless Veterans. Under HUD-VASH, HUD will provide housing assistance through its Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) that allows Veterans to rent privately owned housing. VA will provide to eligible homeless Veterans clinical and supportive services through its health care system across the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam. VA addresses the needs of the more than 100,000 homeless Veterans who access VA health care annually. The HUD-VASH permanent housing initiative offers significant new capacity and VA will specifically target OEF/OIF Veterans, including those with families.

Acquired Property Sales for Homeless Providers Program. The VBA's 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, depending on time on the market 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 will be 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.

Veterans Industry/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. VA operates 54 purchased community residences and nine leased community properties. Fifteen medical centers are using underutilized space on VA grounds. At the end of FY 2009, there were 633 operational beds. Among the 759 Veterans discharged from CWT/TR programs during FY 2009, 82 percent were literally homeless upon admission, nearly all Veterans had a substance use disorder (96 percent) and 59 percent of Veterans were diagnosed with a serious mental illness.

Supportive Services for Low Income Veterans in Permanent Housing 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 will provide grants to non-profits agencies to provide support services, such as legal aid, rent subsidies, childcare and vocational services.

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 soldiers. 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, Calif.; 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 for homeless Veterans in order to 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. The Health Care for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Program is designed to address the community re-entry needs of incarcerated Veterans. HCRV's goals are to prevent homelessness, reduce the impact of medical, psychiatric, and substance abuse problems upon community re-adjustment, and decrease the likelihood of re-incarceration for those leaving prison.

Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) has the goal to avoid 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 VHA mental health and substance abuse services when clinically indicated, and other VA services and benefits as appropriate.

Homeless Veterans Receive Benefits Assistance 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 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 157 Stand Downs held during 2008 that served more than 30,000 Veterans and 4,500 family members of Veterans. There were more than 24,500 volunteers participating 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 re-entry. 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, public and private agency representatives to meet and develop meaningful partnerships to better serve homeless Veterans. In a 2010 report, data was compiled from 16,512 respondents, including 10,701 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 conducted a one-day census to determine the extent of homelessness among Veterans in VA's acute inpatient programs (1995-2000) and found that one-quarter of all Veterans in VA beds were homeless.

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.

VA has initiated outreach to Veterans at risk of homelessness who are being discharged or released from state or federal prison. State-specific resource guides for incarcerated Veterans have been developed that provide contact information and outline steps that Veterans can take to plan their re-entry into the community. There is at least one designated Incarcerated Veterans Outreach Specialist in every Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) to provide outreach and coordinate transitional planning for community re-entry.

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 Homeless Veterans Programs Office at (202) 461-7401, or homelessvets@mail.va.gov

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