Office Hours: Permanent Housing Placement National Challenge to House 38,000 Veterans

VHA Homeless Programs Office – April 8, 2022

Anchoring Our Work

Reminder: Guiding Principles for Reaching Our Goal

- **House literally homeless Veterans**, with priority on the most vulnerable Veterans, identified through coordinated entry processes, local by-name lists (BNL), and VA and community-partner outreach services.
- **Honor Veteran choice**, including needs and preferences for care, when determining appropriate services and housing placements. Center Veterans' lived experience in the effort.
- **Lead with equity** across housing, health care, economic, and social systems, while addressing disparities and continuing to prioritize housing resources for all Veterans. A key driver of homelessness and health disparities is a system wide lack of equity across systems of care stemming from structural racism and systems of discrimination.
- **Provide supportive services** to Veterans with complex needs and/or histories of chronic homelessness through a trauma-informed, Veteran-centered approach that is based in cultural humility.
- **Enhance coordination** among VA homeless programs and community partners, including Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), Grant and Per Diem (GPD), Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Contract Residential Services (CRS) and Low Demand Safe Haven (LDSH) providers; Continuum of Care (CoC) partners; public housing authorities (PHA); advocacy groups for and made up of Veterans with lived experience; landlords; city and county officials; and other service providers.

Defining and Tracking Permanent Housing Placements

- The VHA Homeless Programs Office uses a methodology called vPaths to calculate the number of Veterans receiving services from the following programs:
    - Homeless Programs Residential Treatment (RT) programs (i.e., GPD and HCHV CRS/LDSH)
    - HUD-VASH
    - SSVF-Rapid Rehousing (RRH) services who obtain permanent housing.
- vPaths was developed by VA's Office of Healthcare Transformation and is designed to de-duplicate the number of Veterans placed in permanent housing.
    - Many Veterans utilize multiple programs to become housed (e.g., Veterans who exit HCHV CRS to HUD-VASH).

- **Our programs work as a system.** This methodology provides a system-level view of how effectively our programs operate together to move Veterans from homelessness to permanent housing.
- For the purposes of the National Challenge to House 38,000 Veterans, credited permanent housing placements (PHP) include:
  - HUD-VASH housing move-ins.
  - RT (i.e., GPD and HCHV CRS/LDSH) exits to permanent destination categories.
  - SSVF RRH move-ins or exits to a permanent destination when a move-in date is unavailable.
- Housing placements are de-duplicated when they occur within a similar timeframe.
  - Placements occurring within 90 days of a HUD-VASH housing episode.
  - Placements occurring within 14 days of an GPD or HCHV CRS/LDSH exit to permanent housing.
- PHPs are credited in the following order (while indicating shared placements):
  - HUD-VASH
  - RT
  - SSVF-RRH

Essential Elements to Accelerate Housing Placement

38K Goal: Where Should We Start?
- We know everyone may be in different starting places to organize efforts to meet the goal.
- Today we will review a checklist of key areas to check up on in your programs and communities.
- Subsequent office hours will review each area in depth with guest presenters to share promising practices.
- Your participation and questions will help guide office hours topics as well as additional written guidance from the Homeless Programs Office.

Essential Elements Checklist
- Housing Search Capacity
- Landlord Engagement
- Coordination Efforts
- Tracking Your Progress
- Efficient Document Ready Processes

Housing Search Capacity
- To best support housing placement efforts, your team would ideally have enough staff trained and skilled in providing intensive, frequent, Veteran-level housing search for units.
- If you don't currently have that capacity, consider the following strategies:
  - Ensure strong case conferencing and coordination amongst GPD, SSVF and HUD-VASH teams to identify the most rapid housing options available to the Veteran, even if the Veteran may need more intensive supports over the longer term. For instance, this may mean SSVF making housing placements and supporting tenancies while the longer term need or desire for Shallow Subsidy

services or HUD-VASH are considered, consistent with a [progressive assistance approach](#).

- o Look at your internal staffing and adjust roles to provide intensive support to Veterans to find housing units (e.g., transportation, frequent meetings to view listings, etc.). This may mean reviewing current caseload intensity, working through adjustments, and exploring collaborations with GPD Case Management grantees to bring greater service capacity to HUD-VASH. If available, pull in external supports and staffing to support this effort, as needed.
- o Understand that some progress is better than none – focus on small wins that you can build up over time. Simple training, role definition, and landlord brainstorm discussions can go a long way across teams.
- o Your local CoC may also already have landlord engagement efforts underway that you can tap into.

Landlord Engagement

- Create or tap into existing advertising materials to share with landlords. Simple wiki sites can be an easy way to distribute electronically. Connect with CoC partners, landlord associations, and the local chamber of commerce for help in getting the word out.
- Hold a brainstorming session with community partner VA RRH and tenant based permanent supportive housing (PSH) providers to understand their outreach and engagement strategies
- Consider partnerships:
  - o with [Emergency Solutions Grants – CARES Act (ESG-CV) providers](#) to tap into available landlord incentives and clarify conditions for co-enrollment of Veterans to access those incentives.
  - o with Veterans with lived expertise and lived experiences to learn about barriers and opportunities.
- Connect with local prevention and rental assistance programs and ask them to help recruit landlords from housing owners who have received prevention funds in the past year (SSVF, Emergency Solutions Grant, Emergency Rental Assistance).
- Bake in shared housing options as a selling point. Expand your overall pool of units by including multi-bedroom apartments for rent.
- Partner with property management firms, particularly those who manage tax credit units, and talk with them about the value of your program and services.

HUD-VASH Payment Standard Guidance

- PHAs may go up to, but no higher than, 120% of the published metropolitan area-wide Fair Market Rents (FMR) or Small Area FMRs (based on which FMRs the PHA is applying) specifically for HUD-VASH families.
- A PHA that wants to establish a HUD-VASH exception payment standard over 120% must still request a waiver from HUD through the regular waiver process outlined in [Notice PIH 2018-16](#).
- HUD-VASH program leads are encouraged to first engage your PHA partner regarding this recent guidance.
- Connect with your HUD-VASH Regional Coordinator or NHC to support these discussions as needed.
- For more information review the [recently revised HUD-VASH operating requirements](#).

Coordination Efforts

- Revisit your BNL practices with community partners to ensure all Veterans are on one list to coordinate housing search efforts.
  - Review data sources currently: Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System (HOMES), other?
  - Ensure that data are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and other intersectional characteristics.
  - Revisit meeting frequency and case conferencing expectations as needed.
  - Use your BNL to actively move Veterans toward most immediate, appropriate housing intervention.
  - Remember that your BNL a means to an end (ending homelessness); don't overcomplicate the BNL maintenance process.

Tracking Your Progress

- Track data both quantitatively and qualitatively.
- Use data to identify system bottlenecks that can be addressed to expedite housing interventions while ensuring clarity for the Veteran and service providers (coordinated care and warm hand offs).
- Create improvement goals for different housing milestones and pathways.
  - E.g., decrease the time from HUD-VASH admission to voucher issuance.
- Break down housing referrals and placements by demographics to center equity and prevent or address disparities.
- Review progress at regular intervals.
  - Consider reviewing bi-weekly.

Efficient Document Readiness Processes

- Discuss all possible flexibilities to assist Veterans in becoming document-ready with local PHA partners in order to best expedite housing placement.
  - E.g., look at your PHA's tenant selection plan to understand the types of documents they can use for photographic identification (ID), proof of income, date of birth, Social Security Number, etc.
- Partner with local Social Security Administration (SSA) offices to increase speed and efficiency of document collection.
  - E.g., partner with SSA offices to batch send proof of social security numbers and income.
- Leverage shelter or VA IDs to meet ID requirements.
- Create cover sheets for Veteran files and landlords that include, in order, all necessary documents for ease of tracking and confirmation by the PHA.

Inspections

- Create or adapt materials to prepare prospective landlords for what the PHA will look for during an inspection.
  - E.g., develop pre-check process that help identify issues in advance.
- Consider designating some PSH staff to receive training in HQS best practices to speed up inspection times. Even general knowledge of inspection requirements can help reduce unit inspection failures and the need for reinspection.

- - Check out [VA's Innovative Practice White Paper on Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Pre-checks Toolboxes](#).
- Encourage unit pre-inspection to reduce lease-up time.

Additional Resources
- [COVID-19 Homeless System Response: 5 Tips for Approaching Rehousing with Racial Equity](#)
- [COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Part 1: Equity as the Foundation](#)
- [HUD Landlord Engagement Resources](#)
- [Housing Surges: Special Considerations for Targeting People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness](#)
- [Honolulu Housing Fair Video](#)
- [HUD Shared Housing Guidance](#)