

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

VHA Homeless Programs Office – September 9, 2022

Elements of Effective Veteran Outreach

What Role Does Street Outreach Play in Homelessness Response for Veterans?

- Street outreach is the first line of defense to keep unhoused people safe, particularly in extremely hot or cold weather.
- Street outreach reaches vulnerable Veterans who won't seek services on their own.
- Street outreach reaches Veterans who can't or won't stay in shelter.
- Street outreach provides connection to Coordinated Entry and VA services.
- Street outreach provides education for community partners about available programs and services for Veterans.
- Street outreach offers an opportunity to engage with and build relationships with unsheltered Veterans in the hopes of connecting them to housing.

Unsheltered Homelessness Among Veterans

- According to the [Urban Institute](#):
 - In 2019, 39 percent of Veterans experiencing homelessness were in unsheltered locations.
 - Compared with Veterans in shelters, Veterans enduring unsheltered homelessness were more likely to be male, white and over 50.
 - Veterans enduring unsheltered homelessness were also more likely to have lower educational attainment, a history of criminal legal system involvement, and mental health or substance use challenges.
 - They were less likely than Veterans living in shelters to have income from entitlement programs or disability insurance incurred through military service and to have health insurance.

Street Outreach Core Elements

- Outreach is coordinated with other local service providers. This can include SSVF, Coordinated Entry and other community outreach teams.
- Outreach focuses on permanent housing placement. If a Veteran is reluctant to enter shelter or transitional housing, they can move directly from the street to permanent housing.
- Street outreach is a process rather than a single engagement. Veterans can say no to support, but staff continue to engage them and provide basic necessities during outreach visits.

Street Outreach Best Practices

- Employ a team that reflects or shares experiences with the populations being served, including peers and outreach staff that cross racial, gender and age lines.

- Coordinate across partners to ensure full geographic coverage and connections to populations specific resources or staff.
- Define regular outreach schedules.
- Engage with day programs, meal centers, and other places Veterans experiencing homelessness may be found.
- If at all possible, build partnerships with local law enforcement to support a coordinated, thoughtful response to addressing unsheltered homelessness and encampments.
- Ensure services provided are Veteran-driven, utilizing motivational interviewing approaches.

Process Improvement Opportunities

- Use available data on “known locations” where Veterans stay, such as information obtained through the Point-in-Time Count.
- Establish protocol with the larger homelessness system to connect Veterans to VA programs and resources when they are identified by other programs.
- Define processes to ensure Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness are captured on the By-Name-List.

Bright Spot Communities: VA Palo Alto Health Care System

Coordinated Outreach Flow

- By Name List
- Community Partner Meeting
- Assign Veterans

Feedback Loop

- Document in HMIS
- Report back to meeting
- Triage accordingly

Standardization

- What is “outreach”?
- What are our goals?
- How do we document and where?
- How many attempts before we put our efforts “on hold”?

The Journey

- This is a journey of continuous improvement.
- Challenges:
 - Turnover
 - Agreements (i.e., who’s what’s where’s)
 - Information Sharing

Bright Spot Communities: VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System

Staying Safe

- Always go out with a partner.

- Let someone in the office know where you are going and plan to be back.
- Bring dog treats (Tony Specialty).
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Have an exit strategy.

Coordinating with Community Partners

- Relationship building.
- Open communication.
- Availability.
- Scheduled outreach days with community partners.

Outreach to Veterans

- Relationship/trust building.
- Inquire about previous VA services they have used.
- Explain HCHV Homeless services.
- Updated phone number.
- Set up a follow up encounter.
- Gather information on where they usually stay.
- Complete 10-10EZ forms when needed.

Importance of Peer Support

- Personal experience
- Recovery Model
- Awareness of homeless community
- Community Resources

Resources

- [Core Elements of Effective Street Outreach to People Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Tips to Ensure Safety in Street Outreach](#)
- [Rural Veteran Outreach Toolkit](#)