

Grant & Per Diem (GPD) Program

VHA Homeless Programs

Helpful Practices: Decreasing Negative Exits in Transitional Housing

- Both GPD grantee and liaison should work collaboratively to review and understand GPD transitional housing performance measure data.
 - Review data on unknown status at exit/Veteran left without consulting program staff.
 - Review data on Veterans being asked to leave for rule violations. Discharging for rule violations should be a rare occurrence.
 - Ensure that both liaison and grantee have a clear understanding of how the performance outcomes are measured, what constitutes an exclusion, and what residential treatment exit form responses correlate to the outcomes.
 - A formal review of performance must be conducted at least quarterly. This includes a discussion on negative discharges and strategic planning on how to improve outcomes as needed (discharging for rule violations should be rare).
- Prior to program admission, assess that the Veteran is a match for the type of grant, bed model, program environment and approach, and rules and expectations. Assess for Veteran choice and clinical appropriateness.
- Ensure Veterans are informed of program rules and expectations at time of intake and reminded throughout their stay.
 - Veterans cannot be expected to follow the rules if they are not aware of expectations and potential consequences.
 - Veterans should know who they can go to if they are struggling or considering leaving the program. A discussion with someone they are comfortable with may prevent an abrupt discharge.
- Grantee and liaison should maintain frequent contact to discuss Veteran status and programmatic items.
 - Liaisons to have a consistent presence at the site to provide training to the grantee, assist with problem-solving, and offer feedback on successes and opportunities for improvement.
 - Grantees must quickly notify the liaison of unplanned exits for collaborative engagement, when needed.
- Both grantee and liaison should meet with Veterans frequently, particularly early on in program participation and when there is a risk of the Veteran leaving the program (whether through discharge for rule violation or through the Veteran leaving of their own decision).
 - The grantee must follow what is written in their grant regarding frequency of contact with Veteran (through chart notes, treatment plans and discussion). The liaison will monitor this.
 - The grantee should increase their contact with Veterans during early program stages as it increases rapport, decreasing the change of the Veteran leaving without consulting program staff.

- The liaison should maintain a strong presence at the site, meeting with Veterans in person and providing support, linking Veterans to services, and assisting with steps to permanent housing.
- Liaisons should meet with Veterans who request a meeting, with those who appear to need the support, and with those they have not met with in the last 90 days.
- Schedule some Veterans ahead of time through coordination with the grantee; make sure the Veterans know ahead of time where and when to meet.
- Consider using a sign-in sheet to allow scheduling for Veterans in open time slots.
- Leave some room for flexibility in your schedule and allow some time for unexpected meetings and/or drop-in visits from Veterans.
- Treatment planning and update meetings should include the Veteran, liaison and grantee when appropriate and helpful.
- Grantees should proactively plan for the possibility of the Veteran leaving without consulting program staff and take appropriate steps to locate and re-engage the Veteran when it occurs.
 - Grantees should collect and update Veteran contact information on a regular basis.
 - At time of intake, grantees should assess the Veteran's support system and emergency points of contact, including obtaining Releases of Information (ROI) for family/friends.
 - At time of intake, grantees should assess where the Veteran would be if they were not in the program and where they would go if they left the program unexpectedly, as a matter of safety.
 - Grantees should be committed to reaching out to Veterans directly and quickly notifying VA of unplanned exits for collaborative engagement, when needed.
 - In the case of an unplanned exit, the grantee and liaison should engage in robust attempts to locate the Veteran in a timely manner. If the grantee re-engages the Veteran in programming, the liaison should enter a Help Desk ticket requesting to remove the exit form that was completed at the time of discharge. This creates a continuous episode of care and does not result in a negative exit. Please note that this flexibility does not extend to billing.
- Promote a Housing-First approach, resulting in a decrease in negative exits for rule violations (with the exception of discharge for safety concerns).
- Liaisons should arrange for trainings on subjects that support Veteran success, bringing in subject matter experts when needed. Training topics could include the following:
 - Methods to locate the Veteran when an unexpected exit occurs
 - Understanding HOMES exit form responses and performance measure target
 - Trauma-informed care
 - Harm reduction
- Grantees are required, per signed grant agreement, to engage in a low barrier approach, with discharge as a last resort.
 - Grantees should involve the liaison in discussions early on if it appears the Veteran might be asked to leave for a rule violation.

- Grantee staff should meet the Veterans where they are, not applying a uniform “one size fits all” approach.
- Grantees should focus on engagement rather than strict requirements around case management expectations and/or group attendance.
- Grantees should offer substance use/mental health supports on-site when able, referring to community resources and the VA when appropriate.
- Grantees should create an environment in which Veterans feel comfortable and supported.
- Peer supports should be incorporated into programming where available and appropriate.
- Consider a resident matching program.
- More established residents are matched one-on-one with new residents entering the program to help them get acquainted with the site, the staff, and the residents.
- Policies and procedures should be established to implement this approach.
- Promote a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Consider putting up posters that support LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Have clearly established policies and procedures for discriminatory behavior.
- Attempt to hire staff that reflect the population.
- Empower residents by giving them a voice.
- Establish a resident council.
- Hold weekly or biweekly house meetings.
- Provide an avenue for making suggestions, such as regularly conducted surveys and/or a suggestion box.
- Invite successful alumni to speak at house meetings.
- **Help Veterans visualize the future in their own home and begin discharge planning at point of entry. Celebrate small steps to success!**