

# VHA Homeless Programs Office

Working Together to Help Veterans Exit Homelessness

OCTOBER 2020

## Message from Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office



Staff members from all levels of the [VHA Homeless Programs Office](#) (HPO) have been meeting since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic to plan innovative approaches to help Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness obtain and maintain safe housing. These approaches have proven effective. Many unsheltered Veterans, especially those with chronic health problems, have moved to hotels instead of shelters, which keeps them safer from COVID-19. VA has also provided Veterans who are unhoused with mobile phones to help them stay connected to VA case managers, relatives, and VA telehealth services.

This newsletter will highlight several other key accomplishments. For example, HPO has implemented the Veterans Justice Program (VJP) iPad outreach initiative; expanded Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Continuum; continues to support Veterans impacted by Intimate Partner Violence (IPV); and is updating Stand Downs to be safe and effective during the COVID-19 pandemic.

HPO's core values are at the heart of this vital work. We refer to these values with the acronym "HPO CARES": **Home, Partnerships, Ownership, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, Excellence, and Service.**

**Home:** We believe that ending homelessness starts by providing a safe, affordable, and stable place to call home.

**Partnerships:** We **engage in meaningful partnerships** at the federal, state, and local levels.

**Ownership:** We own and practice **integrity** in every step we take, and believe that **our work reflects our values.**

**Commitment:** We commit to identifying new and better ways of accomplishing our goals through **intelligent risk-taking, creativity, and continual research.**

**Advocacy:** We advocate for **immediate and long-term solutions to homelessness** among Veterans and their families.

**Respect:** We **respect the right to self-determination** among Veterans and their families by demonstrating a high regard for their individual values, preferences, and needs.

**Excellence:** We attain excellence through the pursuit of **continual quality improvement, accountability,** and integration of **best-practice approaches.**

**Service:** We provide exceptional **mission-driven customer service** to all with whom we interact.

As we continue our work in this upcoming year, we will embody these values in the work we do every day for Veterans and their families, as well as with Veterans Integrated Service Networks and VAMC staff, federal agencies, state and local governments, and community partners.

## Program Updates



Reno VA served 175 Veterans experiencing homelessness, most whom also received flu shots.

### Reno Stand Down for Veterans who are homeless altered, not canceled

For 12 years, [VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System](#) in Reno has conducted its annual Homeless Veteran Stand Down. This year, months of planning proved challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, but Reno VA overcame those challenges with innovation ultimately serving 175 Homeless Veterans, most whom also received flu shots. [Read more.](#)

Also, be sure to check out how the Hershel "Woody" Williams VAMC is bringing Stand Downs to the Veterans, WOWK 13 News (Huntington, West Virginia) reports. [Read more.](#)

### Intimate Partner Violence White Paper

HPO is continuing its partnership with the Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program in 2020. Through this partnership, Veterans losing their housing because they are fleeing intimate partner violence are eligible for [Supportive Services for Veteran Families](#) (SSVF) rapid rehousing and other services. Also, in keeping its commitment to bringing Veterans safe and stable housing, HPO recently released a white paper that details promising practices that will help Veterans experiencing intimate partner violence. [Read more.](#)

### VJP iPad Project

In partnership with the HPO Office of Analytics and Operational Intelligence, [VJP](#) has launched a pilot program to distribute iPads to every VA medical center (VAMC) so that incarcerated Veterans and VJP Specialists can meet virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the need for this approach is acute because of physical distancing restrictions, it has potential to transform VJP's outreach capacity in the long term. [Read more about VJP.](#)

For additional information about re-entry programs and services, [visit our website.](#)

### HUD-VASH Continuum

Through a new effort called the HUD-VASH Continuum, VA and HUD will allow Veterans in specific communities who are experiencing homelessness, but who do not qualify for VA health care services, to secure [HUD-VASH](#) housing choice vouchers and access supportive services. More information will be available and shared soon.

## Events



Stand Downs are typically one- to three-day events during which VA staff and volunteers provide food, clothing and health screenings to Veterans who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk.

### Stand Downs

Veterans and volunteers are encouraged to check with the local VAMC or event point of contact (POC) before attending local Stand Downs, as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking the necessary steps to ensure Veterans remain safe. Due to COVID-19, Stand Down events in some locations may have been canceled or postponed until further notice. Some Stand Downs may still occur, with organizers adding extra precautions to protect Veterans, their families, and VA staff from contracting or spreading COVID-19. Visit our [website](#) for more information, including Stand Down POCs and a complete list of upcoming Stand Downs.

Below are upcoming Stand Downs through November 11, 2020:

- November 6, 2020—Butler, PA
- November 6, 2020—Crestview, FL
- November 6, 2020—Hillsboro, OR
- November 6, 2020—Kennewick, WA
- November 7, 2020—Martinsburg, WV
- November 9, 2020—Salem, VA
- November 11, 2020—Portland, OR

## HPO Fact of the Month

### Did you know?

In late 2009, VA announced an ambitious goal to end Veteran homelessness. As a result of VA's close collaboration with local and national stakeholder organizations, many communities are finding success. The national picture has also improved.

[The 2019 Point-in-Time \(PIT\) Count](#)—a "snapshot" of homelessness on a given night in America—shows that homelessness among Veterans is down by nearly 50% since 2010, with a 2.1% decrease in homelessness among Veterans between 2018 and 2019.

## Communicate with Us

We value your feedback about the work underway to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans. Please share your comments by clicking the blue "Contact Homeless Outreach" button on the [VHA Homeless Programs website.](#)