

VHA Homeless Programs Office

Working Together to Help Veterans Exit Homelessness

AUGUST 2020

Message from Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA-**National Homeless Programs Office**



United States, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is pressing-on with its ongoing and aggressive public health actions to protect and care for Veterans during this urgent national crisis. This vital work includes outreach to and care coordination for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In addition to being at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 due to poor living conditions, this subpopulation of Veterans is also at higher risk of unfavorable outcomes if they become infected because of the prevalence of chronic health problems and advanced age among the group. To address the urgent needs of this vulnerable

As COVID-19 continues to spread across the

addressing challenges faced by Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This funding enhances VA's ability to provide homeless prevention and rapid rehousing services to Veterans under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program. It also expands VA's ability under the Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program to provide emergency shelter to Veterans who need to self-isolate to prevent spreading or contracting COVID-19. The funding also enables the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program to waive per diem limits during the crisis to help GPD grantees provide needed emergency housing and supportive services, including emergency placement for Veterans who need to be isolated for their safety or the safety of others. VA cannot do this vital work alone. In addition to the expanded services, and through collaborations with organizations such as America's Adopt A soldier, VA is also helping homeless and at-risk Veterans stay connected to their health care providers and loved ones during the pandemic using donated laptop computers and mobile phones. Healthcare equity is at the center of VA's work serving Veterans. COVID-19 has amplified the structural inequalities that exist within America, including disparate health care access and outcomes. According to the CDC, "Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many people from racial and ethnic minority groups at increased

Administration (VHA), of which \$700 million is devoted to expanding services for and

as likely to die from COVID-19 as white, non-Hispanic, Americans. Every American institution has a role to play in rooting-out structural inequality. For our part, the VHA Homeless Programs Office (HPO) is committed to understanding and addressing racial bias in the delivery of care to the Veterans we serve to ensure we achieve the best possible outcomes for everyone who wore the uniform. To that end, we recently formed the HPO Racial Equity Workgroup. The group has three focus areas: 1. Organization: Conduct a comprehensive organizational assessment to determine

risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19." For example, black Americans are twice

2. Veterans: Develop training for employees and Veterans, which addresses implicit bias, systemic racism, identity, and psychological safety. **3. Field staff:** Assess current reporting processes and communication procedures when discrimination concerns are raised and revise the processes, if necessary.

and operations to have racial equity as a core component and create a more

inclusive workplace where employees feel safe to share concerns.

areas for organizational improvement and growth. Update organizational structure

- **Program updates**



COVID-19 pandemic, the Butler VA HCS suspended on-site operations indefinitely. Working with the Butler VA HCS and VJO staff, Kelly Fulmer, a Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO)

specialist, was able to obtain donated iPads to distribute to McGill and other Veterans in MRT who wouldn't have access otherwise. Once McGill learned how to use the iPad, he was able to resume face-to-face communication with Fulmer, his therapist, and other

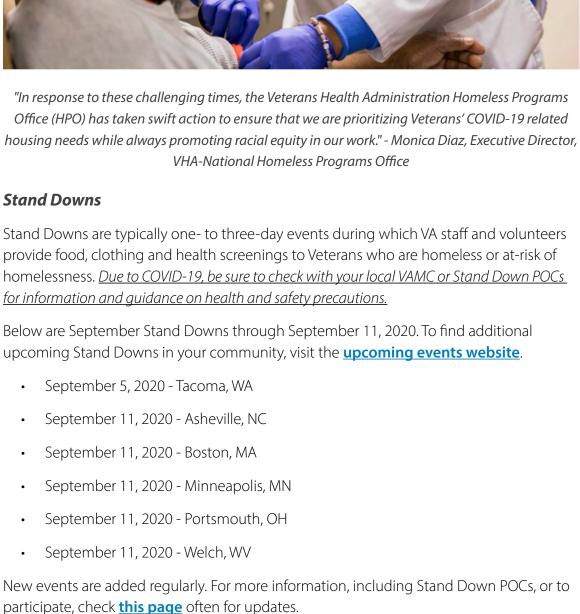
help from the **Butler VA Health Care System** in Butler, Pennsylvania. As a result of the

Veterans. Read the full story. VA to award more than 425 grants, \$279 million to help prevent and end On Wednesday August 19, 2020, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it will award more than 425 grants to community organizations totaling approximately \$279 million under the **Grant Per Diem (GPD) program**. The GPD program provides funding to community organizations that provide transitional housing and supportive services for homeless Veterans, with the goal of helping homeless Veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and income and obtain greater selfdetermination. Read the full news release. VA to award more than \$400 million in grants to end Veteran homelessness On Friday August 7, 2020, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that

it will begin awarding more than \$400 million in grants under the **Supportive Services** for Veteran Families Program (SSVF) to 266 non-profit organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands on October 1 of this year.

Read the full news release.

Upcoming Events



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services) and CareerSource Escarosa will be hosting a regional Amazon virtual job fair on

September 17 to connect Veteran job seekers with employment opportunities.

The job fair will focus on filling hourly entry-level positions at Amazon warehouses, delivery stations, and Whole Food stores (in certain areas) at the following locations:

Regional Amazon virtual job fair on September 17

Theodore, AL (Mobile) Pensacola, FL

Bessemer (Birmingham), AL Lucedale (Hattiesburg), MS

New Orleans, LA

Baton Rouge, LA

Long Beach, MS (Biloxi)

Register for this event or Veterans can apply online at amazon.com/militaryjobs or text **MILITARY** to **77088** for job alerts.

Possible rural delivery stations

resources to address the unique challenges faced by Veterans and their families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CARES Act allocated \$17.2 billion for the Veterans Health Administration, including \$700 million devoted to assisting low-income Veteran families. Visit the VA Homeless **COVID-19 resource page** for more information on VA assistance for

Veterans and their families who are facing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Communicate with Us

Outreach" button on the **VHA Homeless Programs website**.

HPO Fact of the Month Did you know? The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act has expanded