

***The Homeless Programs Office (HPO) newsletter contains news and information about VA's ongoing effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.***



## **Executive Director's Message | Around HPO**

### **Health Update | Staff Spotlight | Fact of the Month**

***Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.***

## **Message From Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office**



While we can't avoid all risk in our day-to-day lives, we can take steps to lessen the impact. When we drive, we can wear seat belts. When it's flu season, we can get flu shots and wash our hands more often. When it's sunny, we can wear sunscreen.

Similarly, for those who are battling substance use issues, there are ways to avoid the greatest risks of drug and alcohol use.

One approach is [harm reduction](#). Harm reduction includes accepting that drug and alcohol abstinence isn't going to work for everyone, and that many journeys to recovery involve setbacks. This method focuses on reducing the riskiest and most harmful behaviors rather than avoiding substances altogether.

It nicely supplements our [Housing First approach](#) to combatting Veteran homelessness, which doesn't require Veterans to clear difficult hurdles to obtain

permanent housing. Recovery can be a long and winding journey, and with Housing First, Veterans don't have to make that journey without a safe place to live.

[Read more.](#)

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## Around HPO

### [Ending Veteran Homelessness Podcast: Reducing the Risk of Harm from Drug and Alcohol Use](#)

Recovery from substance addiction may need to focus on reducing the impact of the substances instead of completely avoiding them—an approach called harm reduction. Meredith Malpass, HUD-VASH regional coordinator and adjunct professor in harm reduction and the science of addiction, joined the *Ending Veteran Homelessness* podcast to discuss how harm reduction goes hand in hand with VA's overall approach to ending Veteran homelessness. [Listen to the episode.](#)



### [Video: HUD-VASH Partners Brainstorm Ways to Better Serve Veterans](#)

Our recent HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program Boot Camps brought regional partners together to discuss how to improve processes, increase voucher utilization, and expand support services to quickly house homeless Veterans and give them the resources they need to remain housed. [Watch our video](#)

to see how these events will benefit Veterans experiencing homelessness moving forward.

### [Homeless Veteran Finds Stability After Her Service](#)

Adjusting to a life without military structure, the camaraderie of a team, and a daily mission left Air Force Veteran Nicalayae Buford feeling adrift—and would eventually lead to her becoming homeless. But with the support of her VA case worker, Buford is now in school with a new job and a stable apartment in which to raise her children. [Read her story.](#)



### [USICH Releases Community Guidance on Encampments](#)

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has created [19 evidence-based strategies](#) to help communities respond to encampments on public land and work to connect



people to housing and services to help them overcome and avoid homelessness.

### [Housing Authorities Eligible for Additional Funding Through HUD-VASH](#)

Public housing authorities participating in HUD-VASH can apply for additional funding to help with leasing HUD-VASH vouchers. Funds can be used to help with a range of activities, including landlord recruitment, housing search assistance activities, landlord/tenant mediation activities, owner incentives and retention payments, and security deposits. Applications are due by May 31, 2024. [Apply today.](#)

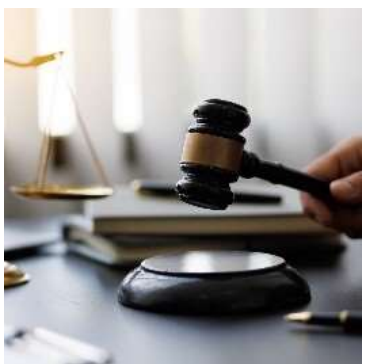


### [White Paper: Common Referral Forms for Housing Providers](#)

The VA Orlando Healthcare System has been identified as a site with an innovative practice to simplify and streamline referrals to community partners that provide transitional housing to homeless Veterans through VA's Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program, helping to house Veterans more effectively. [Read the white paper.](#)

### [JAHVH Deflection Team and Tampa First Responders Partner to Help Veterans](#)

In a groundbreaking collaboration, James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital has joined forces with Tampa-based first responders to address the critical mental health care needs of Veterans in the community. The initiative marks a significant step forward in providing direct access for first responders to connect Veterans with essential mental health services offered by the VA. [Read the story.](#)



### [Veterans Justice Programs Directive](#)

The Veterans Justice Programs (VJP) identify justice-involved Veterans and contact them through outreach in order to facilitate access to VA services at the earliest possible point. VJP accomplishes this by building and maintaining partnerships between VA and key elements of the criminal justice system. [Read the renewed VJP directive,](#) which has many changes driven by changes in VHA's publication policies and standards.



## [Shallow Subsidy Services Program](#)

Shallow Subsidy services offer a set percentage of rental support to Veterans over a defined time, differentiating it from traditional rapid rehousing and homelessness prevention assistance that has more rental assistance flexibility but is generally a shorter, variable timeframe. If you find yourself in need of assistance to stay in stable housing, learn how [Shallow Subsidy services](#) can serve you and your family until circumstances improve.



## [Provide Feedback through the Project CHALENG Survey](#)

The CHALENG Survey allows participants to rate the needs of homeless Veterans in their local communities. The results of the CHALENG survey are used each year to identify unmet needs and encourage new partnership development to meet those needs. If you are a Veteran, community partner, or VA staff member,

[take the survey](#) to let your voice be heard.

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## **HPO Staff Spotlight: Ryan Parish**

*This year, we're spotlighting VA's Housing First approach through a series of interviews with VA employees and taking a look at how they're working to end Veteran homelessness through Housing First. Learn more about [Housing First](#).*

Ryan Parish sees how substance use issues can stand in the way of finding permanent housing. As a substance use disorder senior social worker in the VA Portland Health Care System, Parish trains new social workers on how to use the harm reduction and Housing First approaches to keep Veterans safe and respect their dignity.



[Read more about how Parish incorporates these philosophies in his work.](#)

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## **Health Update**



Connecting with people with similar experiences can be powerful—particularly for those who have served in the military.

This May, for Older Americans Month, the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) is recognizing the strong impact that relationships and