

Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Meeting Minutes September 19, 2023 (9:00 am - 4:30 pm EST)

The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) convened a public hybrid meeting (in person/virtual), which primarily focused on programmatic updates from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Federal and community partners on September 19, 2023, at the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, DC.

Committee Members Present:

Brandon Wilson, Director of Veterans Services of the Carolinas, Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry, ACHV Chair
Ann Oliva, Chief Executive Officer, National Alliance to End Homelessness, ACHV Vice Chair
Kathryn Monet, Chief Executive Officer, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
Dr. Toni Jackman, Adjunct Associate Professor, Health Information Management and Technology Graduate Program, University of Maryland Global Campus, and Faculty, Health Related Professions, College of Southern Nevada
Thomas J. Lyons, Former Deputy Commissioner for Veterans' Services for Boston; Founder of the Semper Fidelis Society of Boston (Virtual)
Wendy McClinton, President and Chief Executive Officer of Black Veterans for Social Justice Inc.
Kathryn C. Monet, Chief Executive Officer, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
Dawanta Parks, Program Manager, Project Liaison, Denver Office of Economic Development Denver Construction Careers Pilot, Bayaud Enterprises
Quandrea Patterson, Associate Director of National Legislative Services, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Josh Protas, Vice President of Public Policy, MAZON, DC Office
Colonel D.J. Reyes, National Veterans Rights Advocate, Senior Mentor Program Coordinator, Tampa, Florida Veterans Treatment Court
Darryl J. Vincent, Chief Operating Officer, U.S. VETS
Donald Whitehead, Co-Founder, Racial Equity Partners
T. Evonne Williams, Manager, Shallow Subsidies, Swords to Plowshares

Committee Members Absent

Dr. Robert E. Accordino, Faculty, Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School
Patrice Livingston, Veteran and Owner of Job Shop Focused on Research and Development

Ex Officio Members Present:

Jeff Olivet, Executive Director, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
Stacey Owens, MSW, LCSW-C, Military and Veterans Affairs Liaison for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Monshi Ramdass, Military Veteran Agricultural Liaison, Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, Office of the Secretary (Virtual)
Norm Suchar, Director, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, Department of Housing and Urban Development

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Ex Officio Members Absent:

Dr. Susan Black, Program Director for Suicide Prevention, Veterans Benefits Administration

Greg Crawford, Correctional Program Specialist at the National Institute of Corrections
Heather Denny, Education for Homeless Children and Youth Team, Department of Education

Ivan Denton, Director, Office of National Programs, Department of Labor

Yashika D. Neaves, Ph.D., Chief, Strategic Plans and Initiatives, Military-Civilian Transition Office, Defense Support Services Center, Department of Defense

Committee Support Staff Present:

Anthony Love, Designated Federal Officer, ACHV, VHA Homeless Program Office (HPO)

Leisa Davis, Alternate Designated Federal Officer, VHA HPO

Lucia Spinelli, Special Assignment, VHA HPO

***Additional attendees may present for a portion or all of the meeting and/or attend for situational awareness. Some, but not all, attendees identified themselves by name. Attendees are not required to identify themselves. The following were identified by their full or partial name:**

Molly Allen

Spencer Bell

Jemima Anglade

Christopher Bennett

Jelessa Burney

Heather Cabeceiro

Rachel Carlson

Karen Cinibulk

Sarah Clinton

Riva Colvin

Meghan Deal

Rick Doran

Anne Dunn

Stephanie Covington

NaShid Dickerson

Marion Fera

Michael Harmon-Fields

Hannah Grabenstein

Angell Bolden-Green

Masaki Hirayama

John Kuhn

Jeffrey Moragne

Jennifer Nemeth

Russ Peal

John Randolph

Raul Rios

Kevin Stanford

Chelsea Watson

Tess Wrzesinski

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Welcome Remarks

Brandon Wilson, Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Chair

- Introduced ACHV Members
- Introduced Federal Ex Officio Members

Welcome Remarks

Ann Oliva, Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Vice Chair

- Provided a brief overview of the meeting agenda

Welcome Remarks

Anne Dunn, Deputy Director, VHA Homeless Program Office (HPO)

- Expressed gratitude to VA field workers in the homeless program.
- VA HPO is very focused on unsheltered homeless Veterans and permanent housing.
- HPO leadership is conducting case conferencing calls with every VISN Homeless Network Coordinator to discuss the list of homeless Veterans who may have returned to homelessness in their VISN and what steps can be taken to get each Veteran on a path to housing or directly back into permanent housing.
- New Legal Services Grants began in June 2023. VA is partnering with 79 grantee agencies to provide legal services to Veterans.
- HPO is also focusing on having a robust peer support program as a part of their justice programs and anticipate having a larger update about this at the April 2024 meeting.
- VA is working with community partners, such as police service, on deflection work, which involves addressing certain barriers such as housing or unemployment, before a Veteran becomes justice involved
- Recruitment and retention of homeless program employees is also a priority for HPO, with special attention being paid to keeping workers in the field safe. HPO has developed a set of training modules with HCHV staff as a way to better support staff in this regard.
- There will be 25 Medical Mobile Units (MMU) deployed across the country. The first MMU was recently deployed in Orlando. MMUs will outreach to Veterans and bring them healthcare where they are.

VA Discussion Questions Virtual Panel

Moderator: Brandon Wilson, ACHV Chair

End of Public Health Emergency

Key Takeaways

Chelsea Watson, National Director, Grant and Per Diem (GPD), VHA Homeless Program Office

- There are 5 types of grants authorized under GPD: Per Diem, Transition in Place (TIP), Special Needs, Case Management and Capital with an authorization of appropriations of \$257.7 million.

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Outside of Special Needs Grants (which have a \$5 million limit, the remaining four grants are generally funded, which means that they don't have a set amount of money allocated to them and HPO can allocate a smaller or larger share of the \$257.7 million to each grant based on shifting needs.

- In order to shift from a per diem grant award amount to a fixed grant award amount, Congress would need to change the statute. Congress also determines the maximum per diem rate. During the COVID Public Health Emergency, the GPD rate was raised to 115% of the State Home Domiciliary rate, where it still stays. There is some concern among GPD providers about their ability to operate if the rate drops to pre-pandemic levels. Some GPD providers have withdrawn from their grants as a result.
- GPD announced at the end of August 2023, that over 11,000 beds were awarded nationwide.

Meghan Deal, National Director, HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing, VHA Homeless Program Office

- One area of focus is collaboration in order expand case management capacity by partnering with grantees for other homeless programs, such as GPD and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and other community partners. These partnerships can help fill empty vouchers while there is a HUD-VASH staffing shortage.
- **Action Item:** Provide SSVF lessons learned/best practices on the Shallow Subsidy Program by November 14, 2023.

Masaki Hirayama, Health System Specialist, VHA Homeless Program Office

- Through the Isakson and Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, section 4201, VA staff were able to purchase life-saving goods and services to help over 69,000 Veterans, utilizing \$13.1 million in funding.
- Another authorization that was not available pre-COVID was the Rideshare program, which utilized rideshare services to provide Veterans with rides to medical and mental health appointments, housing inspections, emergency shelter and more. Before this program, VA staff often had to transport Veterans. Through the Rideshare program, over 494,000 rides were provided to over 44,000 Veterans, costing \$16 million. The rideshare program ended on May 11, 2023.
- The VA will continue to communicate requests for legislation, laws or policies that would give flexible authorization to provide these services again.

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- **Action Item:** Provide an overview of the landlord incentives by November 14, 2023.
- **Action Item:** Provide statistics on Veterans that don't have the level of support and a copy of the testimony by November 14, 2023.

Staffing Challenges/Updates Key Takeaways

Jennifer Nemeth, Director Business Operations, VHA Homeless Program Office

- As of August 31, 2023, there are 6,712 homeless positions with Specific Purpose (SP) funding to support VA Homeless Program Operations, as well as 62 contracts with community partners to provide case management services.
- As of August 31, 2023, 84% of all SP Homeless Program positions are filled, with a 26% turnover rate.
- VAMCs have shared challenges to hiring, such as salaries disparities with the private sector, as well as lengthy hiring delays.
- VA encourages the use of recruitment and retention incentives, including Critical Skills Incentives (CSI) which many VAMCs have already implemented. These incentives have become especially valuable in rural and tribal areas.
- HPO is also working with VISNs/VAMCs on exploring ways to decrease hiring time.
- Staff safety concerns can also lead to turnover, which is why VA is creating new trainings, in addition to PMDB, on personal safety awareness.
- **Action Item:** Provide an overview on how HPO is addressing competitive wages to attract applicants to fill critical positions by November 14, 2023.

Russ Peal, Director, Workforce Recruitment and Retention Service

- A key to staff recruitment is to ensure that we are recruiting diverse populations, especially populations that have not been previously aggressively flooded with information about our opportunities. There's been a concerted effort to ensure that VA is bringing awareness of opportunities into new markets.
- About a year ago, through legislation, the Transitioning Military Program was created and includes strategic nationwide recruitment and marketing initiative designed to connect with soon to be separating, retiring or transitioning Service members who have occupations and skills that are consistent or match with critically needed skills in VA.
- DoD provides a list and VA recruiters will connect with transitional military personnel directly about 12 to 18 months before they are discharged.
- They are also visiting military installations to talk to transitioning healthcare providers and clinical specialists about VA and attending national conferences with transitioning Service members.
- **Action Item:** Provide an overview on VA's role with the DoD Skill Bridge Program by November 14, 2023.

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Kevin Stanford, Program Specialist, Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDC)

- Since Veterans are wired to help their comrades, there are always opportunities to engage Veterans as volunteers.
- Veteran Service Organization (VSO) conventions or other Veteran-targeted events provide great opportunities for Veteran volunteer recruitment. Stand Downs and Point In Time counts are also good opportunities for Veteran recruitment, as Veterans are already engaged.
- We need to provide targeted messaging in the form of things like public service announcements, social media, facility messaging pamphlets, brochures, etc.
- Most importantly, local Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDC) managers need to design, develop, implement and evaluate their volunteer recruitment to specifically match the skills, interest and the motivations of interested Veterans and that allows Veterans to know that their service is directly benefiting other Center for Development and Civic Engagement Veterans.

Update on Greater Los Angeles Health Care System Progress, Challenges Key Takeaways

John Kuhn, Deputy Medical Center Director, Greater Los Angeles (GLA)

- Permanent housing placement rates are up by 32% over last year, through August, with 1171 Veterans entering into permanent housing, compared to 884 at the same point last year. (Through October 2023, 1,464 had been placed, an increase of 33% vs 1,102 thru October 2022)
- One change that has contributed to this is the One Team initiative, where a Veteran's various providers are case conferencing together and assembling the necessary services based on a Veteran's needs
- There has also been an effort to expand emergency housing by launching a call center which allows Veteran to call and be placed in emergency housing same day. The Rideshare program had been helpful in transporting Veterans to emergency shelter; since the end of the Rideshare program, transportation has been challenging but GLA has been able to locate alternate non-appropriation funding to continue a truncated version of the Rideshare program. This version allows GLA to transport unsheltered Veterans to temporary housing on demand.
- In LA County, 207 people (general population, not just Veterans) are placed into permanent housing every day and 227 enter homelessness every day. Solving homelessness in LA requires robust prevention efforts. GLA is putting a focus on prevention, having staff complete rapid resolution and diversion training, which can help Veterans avoid entering the homeless system.
- Also supporting prevention efforts, GLA just launched a program with Single Stop to provide online access to non-VA benefits to help stabilize their housing. This program allows a Veteran to go online, complete a simple screening process and understand where they can apply for a variety of benefits. There will also be case management services for up to a thousand people who need help navigating that system.

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- GLA has also had a large increase in contracts, doubling their Project Based Voucher contracts to \$35 million as a way to bring more community-based resources. This helps leverage the networks and resources of community-based agencies, while addressing shortfalls in VA staffing. SSVF and HUD-VASH have also collaborated. Since both programs are short staffed, they have coordinated their services where SSVF focuses on providing housing navigation services when the Veteran initially enters the program and HUD-VASH will then focus on the longer-term case management.
- GLA seeks to build on its successful CTRS program expanding it to meet the needs of special needs populations, such as families. They are looking to create modular housing where families have their own bathrooms and children have safe place to play and are waiting to hear back on their statutory authority to do this from OGC but are hopeful it will occur in the coming year.
- OGC did not provide statutory approval for Master Leasing so GLA has partnered with LA County who is able to fund master leases while VA focuses on the other parts of housing, such as services and housing navigation. A master lease streamlines the housing search process by creating an immediately available stock of affordable housing.
- Finally, GLA has worked with their housing authorities to receive waivers for some of their documentation requirements which created bureaucratic barriers and created delays in a Veteran being able to access housing. Last month, the PHA issued guidance stating Veterans can self-certify and then focus on getting their documents later and document expiration days went from 60 days to 120 days.
- **Action Item:** Provide a brief overview on the Single Stop Contract and the new Call Center Number by November 14, 2023.
- **Action Item:** Provide a brief overview on the strategies used to collaborate with local and state governments by November 14, 2023.

Federal Agencies and National Partners Updates

Moderator: Brandon Wilson, ACHV Chair

Key Takeaways

Norm Suchar, Director for Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) United States Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- Last year, HUD published a notice of funding opportunity for communities to provide a comprehensive plan on how they will be addressing unsheltered homelessness and funded approximately \$486 million of projects. There was a special fund set aside for rural areas. The funding was created to be flexible, with HUD providing technical assistance for these three year grants.
- There is a strategy going forward of thinking about Continuum of Care (CoC) funds as embedded in the larger ecosystem of housing and healthcare and other supportive services resources instead of its own thing, where CoC funds are viewed as a glue and a magnet to attract and hold together a lot of other kinds of resources.
- HUD has seen communities utilize partnerships with Medicaid funded programs and have been getting questions about how communities can bill a CoC in a per

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client capacity, similar to Medicaid billing.

- The strategy is to integrate with other available resources and have communities thinking about a comprehensive strategy.
- HUD is encouraging communities to come up with more intentional policies on serving the unsheltered, including those in encampments, which can often have more challenges than working with those in shelters.
- HUD is also working with communities to find out how they can lower barriers in the housing process, especially with the gathering of documents, background/credit checks, etc.

USICH

Jeff Olivet, Executive Director, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

- Homeless numbers for populations other than Veterans have been rising over the last few years.
- During COVID, policy choices such as the expansion of the child tax credit, emergency housing vouchers, emergency rental assistance, etc helped flatten the numbers from 2020-2022 but as those policies ended, the numbers have started to rise again.
- The strategic plan that was presented in December 2022, has some key directions to address this. One is taking an all-government approach to address unsheltered homelessness. In June 2023 a project with the White House called all inside launched in six jurisdictions to use flexible funding to create speed and flexibility with how communities are deploying resources for the unsheltered. A seventh site was added in October 2023.
- At the same time, they are trying to pair the initiatives to house the unsheltered population with a focus on prevention. The homelessness response system is only designed to deal with the emergency of homelessness so there is an effort to engage other systems outside of the homeless system to work on the prevention piece.
- Another focus is how to combat the criminalization of homelessness. Since the closure of the encampment in McPherson Square, they've been working very closely with the National Park Service to strengthen their protocol and their approaches to how they address unsheltered homelessness in Washington, DC.
- **Action Item:** Provide a brief overview on the sprints that are currently underway related to Prevention and Benefits by November 14, 2023.

Legislation

Key Takeaways

Spencer Bell, Policy Analyst National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV)

- There are five bills before Congress that have a chance to move and be put in an end of year package.
- S 1436 Charge Act: Originally the bill had included permanent SSVF reauthorization of the authorizations that ended at the end of the public health emergency and increased the GPD rate to 200% of the State Home Domiciliary rate. It also included a 3-year assessment for GPD to improve and adapt.

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- The original version of the Charge Act was put into 2 different bills: HR 491 The Return Home to Housing Act and HR 645 The Healthy Foundations for Homeless Veterans Act. HR 491. These bills were having a difficult time getting through the House committee so House majority leadership created their own combined version of these bills, HR 3848 would increase the GPD rate to 133% and include a waiver for up to 200% for half of recipients but limits SSVF authorizations.
- HR 2525 would expand Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) eligibility to include OTH Veterans.
- NCHV is also working on a Veteran Extremely Low Income (ELI) proposal with the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CPBB). They are also looking at proposals for SSVF administrative flexibilities past 10%, and parity between Federal and State activations in the Reserves and National Guard.
- **Action Item:** Provide a brief overview of the bills that were referenced during the meeting by November 14, 2023.

Ann Oliva, Chief Executive Officer of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, ACHV Vice Chair

- There have been a number of attempts to move some language forward to help modernize the HUD-VASH program which relies on a lot of the design from back in 2,008 and to ensure that VA and HUD both have the right statutory authority to continue to modernize the program and get voucher utilization as high as it can be.
- The Alliance recently published a paper on wages for frontline staff, comparing the average wages for frontline staff for permanent housing and shelter programs to the housing wage and found there's a \$4.8 billion gap.

Public Comments

Lena Asmar, Vice President, Human Services, New England Center and Home for Veterans

- Shared concerns on the challenges serving an increasingly elderly group of Veterans, including the medical and care complexities that frequently manifest in an aging population.
- Structural and service changes are needed within the array of transitional service programs to more effectively support Veterans needing assistance with their activities of daily living (ADLs).
- More assistive and senior-specific affordable and supportive housing is necessary to allow Veterans to live with independence and dignity, with the supports and services that enable them to age-in-place, and to remain in their homes as long as possible.
- **Action Item:** Request an update from Deborah Lee (Homeless Programs Office) related to the ACHV Geriatric Recommendations that were included in the previous Annual Report.

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Veterans with Lived Experience Panel

Key Takeaways From Formerly Homeless Veterans

Moderator: Donald Whitehead, ACHV Member

Overall, there were some common themes amongst the two male Veterans that participated in panel that included:

- Lack of communication at the time of discharge from active duty about what VA services were available to them
- Lack of advertisement of homeless services from VA
- Wanting more open communication between VA and Veterans
- Veterans telling other Veterans about VA services

An overview of the responses from the Veterans Panel is below:

Do you remember receiving any information before you were discharged from the military about VA, how to get enrolled, what benefits and services might be available to you as a Veteran? If so, what information did you get that was most important or helpful?

- Did not receive any information of what VA services offered or how to enroll

How long after discharge did you enroll in VA? If you did not go to VA right away, why not? When did you first receive help from homeless programs?

- Did not enroll with VA until 25 years after discharge because he had previously been over income for VA services. However, had utilized VA home loan in the past.
- Connected to VA 10 years after discharge

What VA programs have helped you the most over the years? What community programs have helped?

- HCHV

Looking back, what do you think could have helped prevent you from becoming homeless?

- If programs had fewer rules and regulations around eligibility criteria
- VA could do better advertising about what programs and assistance they can offer to homeless or Veterans at-risk of homelessness.

What would you like to say to other Veterans who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness?

- Since services can vary from VA Medical Center to VA Medical Center, call around to different VA Medical Centers to see what kind of assistance each can offer you.
- I would refer them to HCHV.

If the Secretary of Veterans Affairs was attending the meeting, what would you ask him?

- Why isn't there more communication about what services are available to Veterans?
- Why is it so difficult to access medical care?

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Summary of Committee Requests for Information and Responses:

The Homeless Program Office will work with the appropriate points of contact to acquire information and share them with the Committee.

Adjournment

Brandon Wilson, Chair, ACHV, adjourned the meeting on September 19, 2023.

I hereby certify, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.



The minutes will be formally considered by the committee at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.

Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Meeting Minutes September 20, 2023 (9:00 am – 12:00 pm EST)

The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) convened a public hybrid meeting (in person/virtual), which primarily focused on Committee recommendations to the Secretary of the VA on September 20, 2023, at the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, DC.

Committee Members Present:

Brandon Wilson, Director of Veterans Services of the Carolinas, Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry, ACHV Chair

Ann Oliva, Chief Executive Officer, National Alliance to End Homelessness, ACHV Vice Chair

Kathryn Monet, Chief Executive Officer, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

Dr. Toni Jackman, Adjunct Associate Professor, Health Information Management and Technology Graduate Program, University of Maryland Global Campus, and Faculty, Health Related Professions, College of Southern Nevada

Wendy McClinton, President and Chief Executive Officer of Black Veterans for Social Justice Inc.

Kathryn C. Monet, Chief Executive Officer, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

Dawanta Parks, Program Manager, Project Liaison, Denver Office of Economic Development Denver Construction Careers Pilot, Bayaud Enterprises

Quandrea Patterson, Associate Director of National Legislative Services, Veterans of Foreign Wars

Josh Protas, Vice President of Public Policy, MAZON, DC Office

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Committee Members Absent

Dr. Robert E. Accordino, Faculty, Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School

Patrice Livingston, Veteran and Owner of Job Shop Focused on Research and Development

Thomas J. Lyons, Former Deputy Commissioner for Veterans' Services for Boston; Founder of the Semper Fidelis Society of Boston

Ex Officio Members Present:

Stacey Owens, MSW, LCSW-C, Military and Veterans Affairs Liaison for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Monshi Ramdass, Military Veteran Agricultural Liaison, Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, Office of the Secretary (Virtual)

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Yashika D. Neaves, Ph.D., Chief, Strategic Plans and Initiatives, Military-Civilian Transition Office, Defense Support Services Center, Department of Defense

Norm Suchar, Director, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, Department of Housing and Urban Development

Committee Support Staff Present:

Anthony Love, Designated Federal Officer, ACHV, VHA Homeless Program Office (HPO)

Leisa Davis, Alternate Designated Federal Officer, VHA HPO

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Jemima Anglade

Jelessa M Burney

Heather Cabeceiro

Sarah Clinton

NaShid Dickerson

Amanda Doemland

Angell Bolden-Green

Rick Gomez

Marion Fera

Michael Harmon-Fields

Sandra Foley

Carma Heitzmann

Jeffrey Moragne

John Savage

Owen L. Myers

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Welcome Remarks

Brandon Wilson, Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Chair

- Introduced the ACHV Members that presented the proposed recommendations for: Peer Support, Transitioning Service Members/Suicide Prevention and Employment so the ACHV Members could provide feedback and vote on the recommendations.

Peer Support (Proposed Recommendations – May Be Subject to Minor Edits)

Colonel DJ Reyes, ACHV Member

Donald Whitehead, ACHV Member

- Recommendation 1A: Further enhance the existing “Peer Specialist Support Program” in the VA Department of Mental Health by hiring on additional personnel to provide “one stop shop” peer mentor assistance, services and referrals in partnership with the community resource network for homeless Veterans currently participating in the VA sponsored Homeless Shelter, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing Programs.
Recommendation: Approved
- Recommendation 1B: Augment the current Peer Specialist training program to include working knowledge and networking with local, county, state, and federal/VA services and programs designed to provide the best-informed support to the homeless Veteran and enhance probability for successful housing outcomes, treatment, rehabilitation, reintegration, and non-recidivistic behavior.
Recommendation: Approved with comment to include an addition of some increased budget or budget considerations to expand peer support program and include homeless program specific Peer Specialists.
- Recommendation 1C: Identify and assign caseloads of homeless Veterans enrolled in the VA Homeless Shelters, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing programs to the Peer Specialist Mentors Team. A successful model for this program is the Orange Blossom Family Healthcare Program in Orlando Florida. The Program is a partnership between Orlando VA, the Homeless Services Network of Orlando and Orange Blossom Healthcare. Orange Blossom Healthcare is a Healthcare for the Homeless Program.
Recommendation: Approved
- Recommendation 1D: Outreach and case management are critical specialties within any VAMC if we are to truly address unsheltered homelessness, particularly via HCHV and HUD-VASH. Yet longer term vacancies within key homeless programs have persisted in some communities due to local HR prioritization decisions. The Committee recommends that by March 2024, HPO and VA’s Office of Human Resources and Administration examine focused hiring efforts implemented in 2015 to prioritize hiring for homeless program staff and

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implement successful strategies from those efforts to accelerate hiring for homeless positions within VAMC operations.

Recommendation: Approved with comment to change March 2024 to October 2024.

Workforce Recommendations (Proposed Recommendations – May Be Subject to Minor Edits)

Dawanta Parks, ACHV Member

- Recommendation 1A: Conduct a feasibility study to ensure that homeless Veterans receive adequate support within the framework of the Veterans' Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program. If the study indicates a need for additional support, enhance VR&E policies and procedures to guarantee that homeless Veterans receive an appropriate level of assistance.
- Recommendation 1B: Conduct the study with a data sharing agreement between the VR&E database and VHA HOMES system. The final study report will include an analysis of any gaps in service delivery (e.g., participation rates, outcomes) for Veterans experiencing homelessness and a plan to address those gaps.
Recommendation: 1A and 1B approved with comments to include Recommendation 1C: There is a need for additional support to enhance the VR&E Policies and Procedures and/or any other strategies to address those gaps.
- Recommendation 2: Authorization of continued funding for Supportive Services in VA Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services (HVCES).
Recommendation: Approved with comment to include: "Using the Secretary's already established authority within a budget, to secure a pathway and funding for Section 4201(a) of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act Of 2020 (Public Law 116-315)"

Transitioning Service Members/Suicide Prevention (Proposed Recommendations – May Be Subject to Minor Edits)

Evonne Williams, ACHV Member

- Recommendation 1: For VA to establish a Task Force that includes VHA and VBA, inviting DoD to provide more connection points to include better coordination from the VA to TSM regarding services and peer support. Develop pathways for VHA/VBA services for high-risk TSM with mental health Service Connected Disabilities and creating strategies to prevent Veteran homelessness and suicide. Provide an update on established Task Force at the April 2024 ACHV Meeting.
Recommendation: Approved

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- Recommendation 2: To establish a pilot program that provides Transitioning Service Members, who have mental health Service-Connected Disabilities, with a Peer Support Specialist for one year post discharge to support mental health and to connect with VHA/VBA and community resources. This pilot program should be established by September 2024 and implemented by January 2025, with an evaluation report due by September 2025.

Recommendation: Approved

Closing Remarks

Brandon Wilson, Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Chair

- Commended Committee Members on their work this year and stressed the importance of staying engaged in an intentional way throughout the following year and meeting the Annual Report's Due Date so VA can prepare their responses to the recommendations before the final report is due March 2024.
- **Action Item:** HPO ACHV support staff will designate POCs to provide written responses to Annual Report Recommendations that will be included in the March 2024 Annual Report.
- **Action Item:** ACHV will consider including the following topics in future reports: Geriatrics, Prevention, Coordinated Community of Care, Communications Plan, Access for Service and Non-Service Connected, Employment, After Care.

Adjournment

Brandon Wilson, Chair, ACHV, adjourned the meeting on September 20, 2023.

I hereby certify, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.



The minutes will be formally considered by the committee at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.