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VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VISN 1

Help for Homeless Veterans



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Introduction

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers many benefits designed to help homeless Veterans and their families live as self-sufficiently and independently as possible. These benefits include the following:

- Outreach to Veterans living on the streets or in shelters who would otherwise not seek assistance
- Clinical assessment and referral to medical treatment for physical and psychiatric disorders, including substance abuse
- Long-term sheltered transitional assistance, case management, and rehabilitation
- Employment assistance and linkage with available income supports
- Supported permanent and/or transitional housing

Women Veterans

The VA Women Veterans Health Care Program provides women Veterans with services such as emergency shelter, transitional housing programs, and permanent housing. For more information, call the Women Veterans Call Center at **855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)** or visit: **www.womenshealth.va.gov**



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How to Access Services

While this guide focuses mostly on VA assistance, other programs may be available to you. Contact a Homeless Program point of contact at the nearest VA facility to find out more.

Find the nearest VA facility at: **www.va.gov/find-locations** or call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at: **877-424-3838** (24/7 assistance)

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans

VA is dedicated to ending Veteran homelessness. If you are a Veteran who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, we strongly encourage you to contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at: **877-4AID-VET** or **877-424-3838**



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Stand Downs

Stand Downs are one- to three-day events that are part of VA's efforts to provide the following services to homeless Veterans:

- Food
- Shelter
- Clothing
- Health screenings
- VA benefits counseling
- Social Security benefits counseling
- Referrals to a variety of other necessary services (such as housing, employment, and substance abuse treatment)

Many services are brought to a single location. Stand Downs can be held indoors, in parks, on football fields, in parking lots, or in other wide-open spaces.

QuickClick

If you have access to the Internet, find upcoming Stand Downs in your area at:
www.va.gov/homeless/events.asp



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Housing

VA and Federal Government programs provide a range of housing options for homeless Veterans and their families.

Permanent Housing Programs

Supportive Services for Veteran Families

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program offers grants to private nonprofit organizations and consumer cooperatives to provide supportive services to very low-income Veteran families living in or transitioning to permanent housing.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing

The Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program provides eligible Veterans with housing assistance to rent privately owned housing along with long-term case management and support services to help stabilize recovery from health issues that may cause a Veteran to lose permanent housing.

If you are eligible, you are expected to participate in case management and to use the supportive services.

Temporary Housing Programs

Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program

The Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) program offers housing services to homeless Veterans. It also places homeless Veterans with serious mental health diagnoses into quality, community-based, supportive housing through its Contract Residential Treatment program.

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Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans

The Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) program provides short-term treatment and rehabilitation services. The average length of stay in the program is four months.

Grant and Per Diem

The Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program offers funding to community-based agencies to provide homeless Veterans with supportive housing and services to improve residential stability. Services are provided to Veterans for up to 24 months.

Other Services

Community Resource and Referral Centers

Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRCs) provide homeless Veterans with refuge and referrals to physical and mental health care resources, job development programs, housing options, and other VA and non-VA benefits.

QuickClick

If you have access to the Internet, visit the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans website to find local services: **https://nchv.org**

Visit HUD's website for information on housing, food banks, legal assistance, hotlines, and more: **www.hud.gov/topics**

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Health

VA Health Care provides a broad range of health care benefits to enrolled Veterans, including the following services:

- Hospital, outpatient medical, dental, pharmacy, and prosthetic services
- Domiciliary, nursing home, and community-based residential care
- Sexual trauma counseling
- Readjustment counseling
- Health and rehabilitation programs
- Specialized health care for women Veterans
- Alcohol and drug dependency treatment
- Medical evaluation for military service exposure (Gulf War, Agent Orange, radiation, and other environmental hazards)
- Death and burial benefits

How to Find Out More

If you think you may be eligible for VA Health Care and have access to a phone, call VA at: **800-827-1000**

A representative can answer questions about benefit eligibility and explain how to apply.

QuickContact

The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans offers free, 24/7 access to trained counselors.

To speak with a trained VA staff member, call: **877-424-3838**

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Health Care for Homeless Veterans

Every VA medical center has a Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) coordinator to help homeless Veterans access VA and community-based care. The HCHV program provides outreach, clinical assessments, and referrals for medical and mental health care, long-term transitional residential assistance, case management, and employment assistance with linkage to permanent housing.

QuickClick
If you have access to the Internet, find your state's coordinator at: **www.va.gov/homeless/hchv.asp**

Substance Abuse

Many people find it difficult to cut down or stop using substances on their own. The VA offers effective treatments for substance abuse problems. The treatments address all types of substance abuse problems, from unhealthy use of alcohol to life-threatening addictions.

The VA provides effective services for all eligible Veterans, no matter where they come for services.

VA providers know that, in many cases, substance abuse problems are conditions that require care over a long period of time. For other Veterans, substance abuse problems may be resolved more quickly by paying attention to other related problems, for example:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- Pain
- Disturbed sleep
- Irritability
- Relationship problems

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

It is normal to have stress reactions after a traumatic event. Your emotions and behavior can change in ways that are upsetting to you. Even though most people have stress reactions following a trauma, their reactions improve with time.

Seek help if your symptoms last longer than four weeks and interfere with your daily activities.

There are four types of PTSD symptoms:

1. Reliving the event (reexperiencing symptoms)

- Memories of the traumatic event coming back at any time and feeling the same fear and horror you did when the event took place
- Nightmares
- Feeling like you are going through the event again
- Seeing, hearing, or smelling something that causes you to relive the event (a trigger)

2. Avoiding situations that remind you of the event

- Avoiding talking or thinking about the event
- Avoiding crowds because they feel dangerous
- Keeping very busy or avoiding seeking help because it keeps you from having to think or talk about the event

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3. Negative changes in beliefs and feelings

- Not having positive or loving feelings toward other people
- Distancing yourself from others
- Forgetting about parts of the traumatic event or not being able to talk about them
- Thinking that the world is completely dangerous and that no one can be trusted

4. Feeling keyed up (hyperarousal)

- Feeling jittery or always alert and on the lookout for danger
  - You might suddenly become angry or irritable. This is known as hyperarousal.
- Difficulty sleeping
- Trouble concentrating
- Being easily startled by a loud noise or surprise
- Wanting to have your back to a wall in a restaurant or waiting room

PTSD symptoms usually start soon after the traumatic event. But for some people, symptoms appear only months or years after the trauma.



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How to Access Services

There are effective treatments available for PTSD. If you have access to the Internet, find the nearest VA medical center at:
www.va.gov/find-locations

You can also call VA Health Care at: **877-222-8387**

Suicide

Problems can sometimes seem like they are impossible to solve for many reasons. At times, we are not even fully aware that a problem is building up; we just know something is wrong. When problems build up, even the strongest individuals may think about suicide. But suicide is never the solution.

Are you or someone you know at risk for suicide?

Seek help immediately if you notice any of the following warning signs:

- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Looking for ways to kill themselves
- Trying to get pills, a gun, or other means to self-harm
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide
- Feeling hopeless

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- Experiencing rage/uncontrolled anger or seeking revenge
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities
- Feeling trapped, like there's no way out
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Withdrawing from friends or family
- Having dramatic mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason for living or no purpose in life
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Giving away possessions

QuickContact

The first thing to do is ask for help. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at: **988 and press 1 or text 838255**. The hotline is staffed 24/7 by trained professionals who can get you the help you need.

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

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Vet Centers

Vet Centers provide readjustment counseling and outreach services to all Veterans who served in any combat zone. Readjustment counseling includes a wide range of services to help transition Veterans from military to civilian life.

Vet Center services include the following:

- Individual counseling
- Group counseling
- Marital and family counseling
- Bereavement counseling
- Medical referral
- Help in applying for VA benefits
- Employment counseling
- Guidance and referral
- Alcohol/drug assessment
- Military sexual trauma counseling and referral
- Information and referral to community resources

Counseling Locations

VA's readjustment counseling is provided at community-based Vet Centers located near Veterans and their families. There is no cost for Vet Center readjustment counseling.

QuickContact

Vet Center staff at the VA Readjustment Counseling Service Call Center are available toll-free and 24/7 at:
877-WAR-VETS (927-8387)

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Food Stamps

Food can be purchased with benefits provided by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Most homeless people are eligible for SNAP.

- You do not need to provide a permanent mailing address.
- Your car will not be counted as a resource if you are living in it.
- You may be able to use your food stamps at some soup kitchens and restaurants.
- You may be able to get a deduction if you are paying to stay in a homeless shelter.

You may need to provide the following information to enroll:

- Your Social Security number
- Proof if you are receiving Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits
- Medical bills if you are receiving Social Security or SSI benefits because you have a disability

How to Access Services

Talk to your case manager to find out if you are eligible. If you don't have a case manager, contact a Homeless Program point of contact at the nearest VA facility. Visit: **www.va.gov/find-locations**

You can also call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at: **877-424-3838**

QuickContact

If you have access to a phone, call the SNAP toll-free information number at: **800-221-5689**

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Income Assistance

There are five major programs that can provide income assistance if you are homeless:

1. **Social Security** – a monthly benefit program for people age 62 and over

2. **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** – a monthly benefit program for people with a disability who have little income

3. **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)** – a monthly benefit for people with a disability

4. **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** – a cash benefit and work opportunity program for financially needy families with children

5. **VA Disability Compensation** – a monthly benefit paid to Veterans who have disabilities caused by an injury or disease that developed or worsened in the line of duty

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How to Access Services

Talk to your case manager to find out if you are eligible to receive these benefits. If you don't have a case manager, contact a Homeless Program point of contact at the nearest VA facility.

If you have access to the Internet, find the nearest VA facility at: **www.va.gov/find-locations**

You can also call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans to be connected to a trained VA staff member at: **877-424-3838**

If you think you may be eligible for VA Compensation, call VA at: **800-827-1000**

A representative can answer questions about benefit eligibility and explain how to apply.

Jobs

American Job Centers

American Job Centers are free job-search and employment centers. They are open to the general public and located in communities across the U.S. They provide information and assistance to people who are looking for a job or need education and training to get a job.

American Job Centers offer a variety of services, including:

- Free access to telephones, computers, Internet, printers, and fax machines.
- Job-search, job-placement, and job-counseling services.

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- Educational and training services to those who are eligible.
- Referrals to supportive services, such as transportation, child care, and housing, when available.

QuickContact

To find your local American Job Center, call toll-free:
877-US2-JOBS (877-872-5627)

If you have access to the Internet, go to:
www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp



Compensated Work Therapy

You might be able to participate in VA's Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Work (CWT/TW) program. CWT/TW participants are matched to actual work assignments on a time-limited basis. The goal is for participants to transition from their assignments to competitive employment in their communities.

For more information, go to: **www.va.gov/health/cwt**

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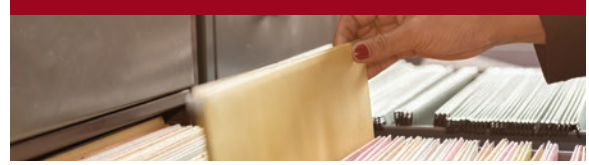
Replacing Military Records

If discharge or separation documents are lost, you may obtain duplicate copies. If you have access to the Internet, complete the forms online at: **www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records**

If you do not have Internet access, you can request the forms from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) at: **314-801-0800**

You can also mail your request to the NPRC at:

National Personnel Records Center
Military Personnel Records
1 Archives Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63138



Specify that a duplicate separation document is needed. Include your branch of service, service number, or Social Security number, and exact or approximate dates and years of service.

You do not need to request a duplicate copy of your discharge or separation papers just to file a claim for VA benefits. If complete information about your service is provided on the application, VA will obtain verification of service.

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Veterans in the Criminal Justice System

Veterans are not more likely to be arrested than the general population, but a significant number of Veterans are involved with the criminal justice system, many of whom struggle with mental health or substance abuse illnesses.

- Veterans are estimated to represent about 5% of state prison populations. The majority served in the Army (55%), followed by the Navy (20%) and the Marine Corps (18%).
- Approximately 70% of Veterans in jail were incarcerated for nonviolent crimes.
- Roughly 60% of Veterans in jail reported substance use problems, one in three had serious mental illness, and 20% were homeless.
- Over 75% of incarcerated Veterans received an honorable or general discharge.
- In 2019, 4.4% of offenders sentenced in Federal courts were Veterans, with an average of 23 years between separation from service and the offense.



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Veterans Justice Outreach Program

VA is committed to the principle that when mental illness plays a role in nonviolent crimes committed by Veterans, both the Veteran and the community are better served by treating the Veteran's mental illness rather than incarcerating them.

The purpose of the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program is to avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among Veterans. This is done by making sure that eligible justice-involved Veterans have access to Veterans Health Administration (VHA) mental health and substance abuse services, and other VA services as needed.

Under VJO, each VA medical center has a designated justice outreach specialist. VJO specialists act as a link between VA, Veterans, and the local justice system. They serve both incarcerated Veterans and justice-involved Veterans who have not been incarcerated.

QuickClick

If you have access to the Internet, find the VJO specialist in your area at:
www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp

VA cannot provide legal services. If you need legal assistance, go to:
www.statesidelegal.org/findinghelp

Your local VJO specialist may also know of community resources for legal assistance.

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Resources

General

VA Homeless Programs
https://department.va.gov/homeless

Vet Centers
www.vetcenter.va.gov

To talk to another combat Veteran, call the toll-free 24/7 Vet Center Call Center:
877-WAR-VETS (927-8387)

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
www.nchv.org
800-VET-HELP (838-4357)

Veterans Benefits Administration
www.benefits.va.gov
800-827-1000

Stand Down Events
https://department.va.gov/homeless/stand-down-events

Housing

Department of Housing and Urban Development
www.hud.gov

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Health & Wellness

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
www.va.gov/homeless/nationalcallcenter.asp
877-424-3838

VA Health Benefits
www.va.gov/health-care
877-222-VETS (222-8387)

Veterans Crisis Line
www.veteranscrisisline.net
Dial 988, then press 1

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
www.fns.usda.gov/snap
800-221-5689

Employment

American Job Centers
www.careeronestop.org

Compensated Work Therapy
https://department.va.gov/vha/compensated-work-therapy

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VA Medical Center

Contact your local VA medical center and ask to speak with your Homeless Veterans Program Manager.

Altoona | James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center
877-626-2500

Butler VA Medical Center
800-362-8262

Clarksburg | Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center
800-733-0512

Coatesville VA Medical Center
800-290-6172

Erie VA Medical Center
800-274-8387

Lebanon VA Medical Center
800-409-8771

Philadelphia VA Medical Center
800-949-1001

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
866-482-7488

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center
877-928-2621

Wilmington VA Medical Center
800-461-8262

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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
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Help for Homeless Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has designed special programs to help homeless Veterans and their families live as independently as possible.

- Housing assistance
- Health care benefits
- Vet Centers
- Income assistance and job-search programs
- Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
877-424-3838
department.va.gov/homeless

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