

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Integrating Employment and Housing Interventions

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Health Care for Homeless Veterans Programs

VA Western New York Healthcare System



Health Care for Homeless Veterans Drop-In Center



Offers Veterans : immediate psychosocial assessments, medical care, showers, clothing, computer access, laundry, VBA rep, job postings, housing groups, phone access



Health Care for Homeless Veterans Drop-In Center





Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program



Contract Residence
Eagle Star Emergency Housing
16-male bed facility





Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program

Grant and Per Diem Program
Altamont Transitional Housing
34-male bed facility
*75% of Veterans discharged in 2021
obtained competitive employment*





Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program

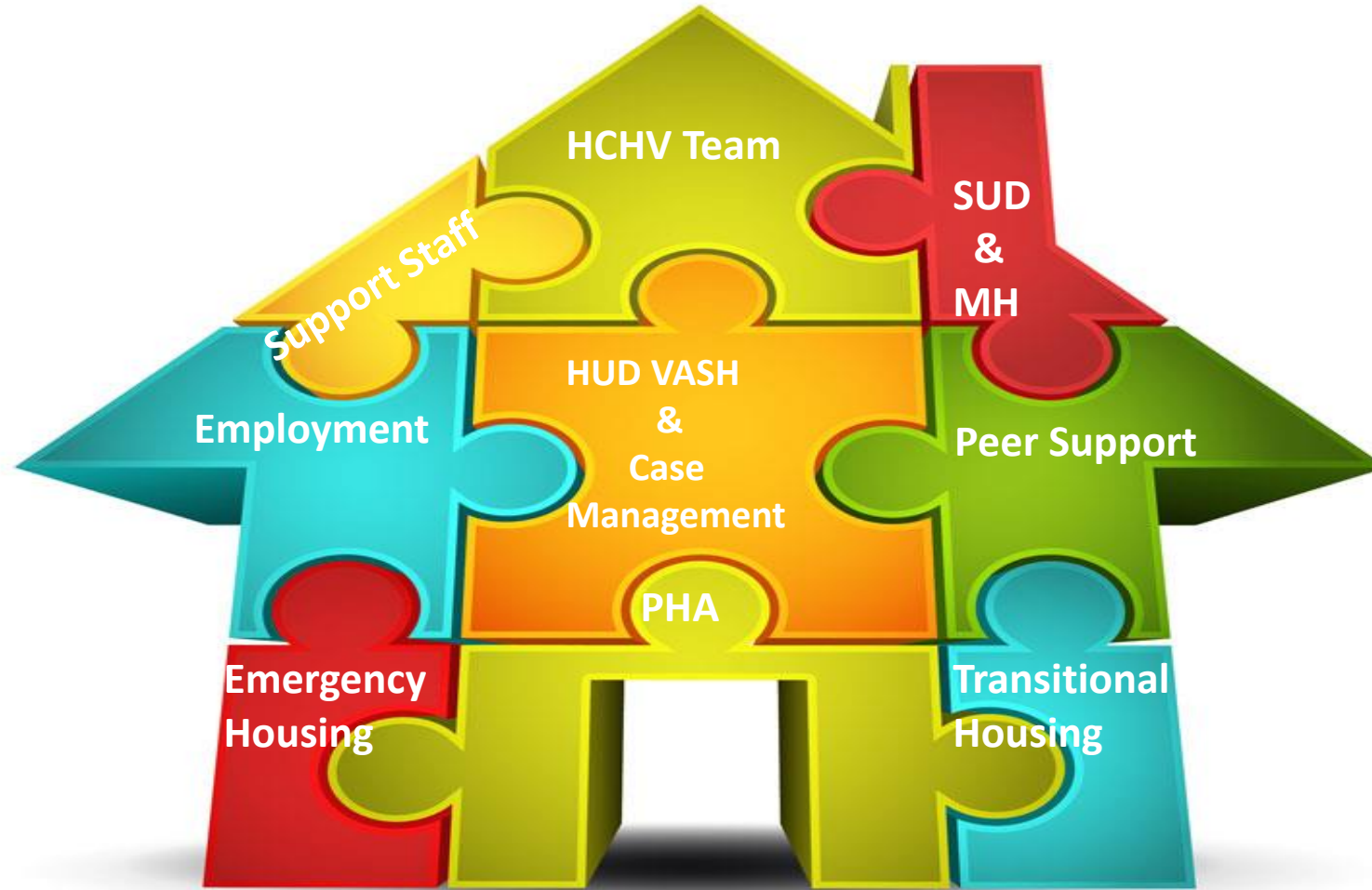
HUD-VASH

- Section 8 “Housing Choice” voucher
- VA case management follow up
- Pilot Program in 1996
- Expansion in 2008
- Currently have 334
- *68% of Veterans enrolled have obtained competitive employment this FY*





The Team Approach





Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services (HVCES)

- HVCES is staffed by Vocational Development Specialists who function as Community Employment Coordinators (CEC) and Employment Specialists.
 - Collaboration between Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) Vocational Rehabilitation/Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Program and Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Vocational Readiness and Employment (VR&E), to identify employment resources
 - Work collaboratively with Veterans & providers to identify & develop vocational goals
 - Evaluate factors impacting employment (transportation, benefits, physical limitations)
 - Connect Veterans to community resources
 - Support development of job search skills (resumes, job searching, interviewing practice)
 - Promote job maintenance skills
 - **View employment as a key to helping Veterans prevent or exit homelessness**



INTEGRATING EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING INTERVENTIONS

Shannon Hagy, MSW, LSW, CWC

Clinical Director at Veterans Place of Washington Boulevard



★ VETERANS PLACE OF WASHINGTON BOULEVARD

★ MISSION ★

The mission of Veterans Place is to empower veterans' transition from homeless to home, ending the cycle of homelessness, and to assist all at-risk veterans to become engaged, valuable citizens who contribute to their communities.

★ VISION ★

The vision of Veterans Place is a community where veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring and where veterans are valued, productive, and respected citizens who contribute to their community.



★ VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER

- GPD Service Center
 - 1 of 15 in the US
- GPD Case Management
- Female & Minority Veteran Program
- Opioid Response Program
 - 1 of 7 in PA
- Humanitarian Program
- Food Pantry
- Supportive Services



CARF Accredited for
Services Coordination



7,399

VETERANS AND
FAMILIES FED IN 2021





CARF Accredited for
Community Housing

★ TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

- Temporary living facility with 13 townhouses
- House up to 48 veterans at a time
- Grant Per Diem
 - SITH
 - Low Demand
 - Bridge



6 MONTHS
AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY



80% OF VETERANS SERVED
THROUGH THE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
PROGRAM MOVED INTO PERMANENT
HOUSING AND HAD A SUSTAINABLE
INCOME AT THE TIME OF DISCHARGE
FROM PROGRAM



★ WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



CARF Accredited for
Community Employment Services:
Employment Supports & Job Development

- Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP)
- Post 9/11 Employment Program
- Transitioning Veteran Employment Program



93 VETERANS
PLACED IN SUSTAINABLE
EMPLOYMENT



\$16.64/HOUR
AVERAGE
PLACEMENT WAGE



100% OF VETERANS ENROLLED
IN THE PROGRAM ATTAINED
SOUND EMPLOYMENT





Importance of Employment

- Provides a sense of purpose
- Allows Veterans to use life/military experience in the civilian world
- Provides mental & financial stability
- Improves quality of life
- Increases self-confidence and independence
- Decreases reliance of institutional care
- Expands social networks, decreases social isolation

“A job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It’s about your dignity. It’s about respect. It’s about your place in your community.” –President Joe Biden

★ IMPORTANCE OF HOUSING

- Stability and safety
- Health related needs (sleep, meals, elements, etc.)
- Mental health
- Dependents
- Stressors





QUESTION

Why is it important to address both housing and employment insecurities?



★ **TAKING AN INDIVIDUALIZED & HOLISTIC APPROACH**

- Meet the veteran where they are at
- SMART goals
- What works for one, won't work for all
- Basic needs
- Address the problem, not just the symptom



★ TREATMENT TEAM

- Weekly case conferencing
- Internal program staff
- Community partners
- VA Liaisons





Barriers to Employment

- Lack of education/experience
- Gaps in employment, history of unemployment/short-term employments
- Lack of technological resources for job searches, applications and correspondence with employers
- Mental Health and/or Substance Use concerns
- Lack of transportation
- Criminal history



★ BARRIERS → HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

- Transportation
 - Bus tickets/passes, gas cards
- Education
 - Training, certificates, education benefits
- Stigma
 - Community based education
- Legal History
 - Veterans Court, working with PO's, employer expectations
- Mental Health
 - VA support, community-based providers
- Technology
 - Access to technology, training, virtual needs
- Accessibility
 - what are the veterans needs and how do we ensure they have access
- Substance Use
 - VA support (CTAD, Domiciliary, Behavioral Health Walk-In), community-based providers



★ QUESTION

What are barriers do you come across and what resources do you use to address those barriers?





Employer Engagement Tips

- Attend job fairs/resource fairs to regularly network with employers
- Routine follow up!
- Provide education regarding benefits of hiring Veterans
- Link with HR departments to obtain regular job listings
- Connect with community employment agencies to network and gain resources
- Provide support to Veterans
- Relationships, relationships, relationships....





Community Collaborations

- **Buffalo Employment and Training Center**
 - Funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
 - Provides job listings, resume development and job placements
 - Can offer monetary incentives to local employers to higher Veterans
- **WNY Employment Consortium Meetings**
 - Goal is the promotion of integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities
- **Veterans One-Stop Center of WNY**
 - Partners with job developers from Goodwill of WNY with a comprehensive menu of services
 - Offers a clothing closet with new or gently used business attire for men and women
- **Supportive Services-Employment Services & Senior Community Service Employment Program**
 - Assists Veterans age 55+ with finding meaningful employment/vocational resources

★ TIPS ON ENGAGING EMPLOYERS

- Meet with hiring manager
- Case management “perks”
- Touring employers' facilities
- Follow up
- Job fairs – networking
- Education around hiring a veteran





Success Story

Example #1

- City Officials located a Veteran who spent six years in a secluded bunker he dug in a wooded area outside of Buffalo
- Veteran reported he went underground because he didn't want to deal with government or the formal institutions of society
- He reported he spent two years digging and fortifying the bunker, which included a small bed, a small fireplace made from concrete blocks and improvised toilet facilities
- After his story hit local news, his bunker was vandalized and uninhabitable
- Veteran obtained emergency housing through the VA
- Linked with CWT
- Obtained housing through HUD VASH (remodeling his entire apartment himself!)
- Has been gainfully employed for over 10 years

★ **SUCCESS STORY**

- Veteran came to Veterans Place from Federal prison
- Enrolled in Veterans Place Transitional Housing
- Linked with healthcare services at VA
- Enrolled in Veterans Place Opioid Response Program
- Enrolled in Veterans Place HVRP Employment Program
- Obtained a job making \$20/hr
- Saved enough to buy a car
- Successfully working on permanent housing opportunities with their case manager





Success Story

Example #2

- Veteran was released from prison after 30 years
- Veteran obtained emergency housing through NYS Parole
- Linked with HCHV through our Drop-In Center
- Secured an apartment through HUD VASH
- Linked with CWT
- Obtained permanent position in Human Resources at the VA
- Now owns his own home, a new car and a motorcycle
- Has been happily married for 9 years

★ SUCCESS STORY

- Veteran was referred to Veterans Place by a SSVF community partner
- Veteran recently had relocated to Pittsburgh from Africa
- Veteran is the primary caregiver for their son
- Veteran needed employment to obtain housing for them
- Veteran enrolled with Veterans Place HVRP Employment Program
- Veteran obtained employment as a Special Education Teacher making \$52,000/year
- Veteran and their son are now housed in an apartment through the SSVF community partner
- Veteran is enrolled in additional services at Veterans Place for follow up support

