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Home for the Holidays:

A Toolkit to Support Unsheltered and Housing Surges

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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Home for the Holidays Toolkit Purpose

No Veteran should be homeless in the country they took an oath to defend, and it is our responsibility to ensure that anyone who has served our nation has access to high-quality housing and health care services.

In FY25, all VA Health Systems nationwide conducted at least one Unsheltered Surge event as part of the Getting Veterans Off the Street (GVOTS) initiative. Sites should build upon their success from GVOTS event(s) to further our collective mission. To continue the momentum from GVOTS, all VA Health Systems nationwide are required to complete an additional Surge Event **by January 31, 2026**. To meet this requirement, the "Home for the Holidays" initiative allows for VA Health Systems to complete either an **Unsheltered Surge** event **or** a **Housing Surge** event (or both). Further details on the aspects of these events are available throughout this document and VA's One Team Toolkit.

The VA Homeless Programs Office is giving local VAMCs and their partners latitude to determine how best to structure their local events. Sites should consider which event or combination of events is the best fit based on available data on resources and needs, including the number of unsheltered Veterans on their By Name List (BNL), Veterans in interim housing, Veterans enrolled in housing programs but not yet leased up, available HUD-VASH vouchers or SSVF resources, etc.

Regardless of which type of surge event a site selects, this document is intended to be used by sites to help plan for and implement their Home for the Holidays Surge event(s). It describes the Home for the Holidays Surge expectations and provides information to support sites to implement successful unsheltered or housing surges. The document will provide an overview of key components of unsheltered and housing surges and provide best practices for operationalizing these events, within the context of the One Team Operational Framework. The toolkit will also provide additional resources and planning tools.

Why Focus on Unsheltered Homelessness?

Unsheltered homelessness, i.e., sheltering in a place that is not meant for human habitation, remains a serious public health concern with severe, even deadly, consequences. Unsheltered Veterans experience significant health challenges, which increase their vulnerability when compared to Veterans who are sheltered. Unsheltered homelessness can lead to worsening health, increased exposure to trauma, along with a multitude of other negative outcomes. The mortality rate for unsheltered Veterans is three times higher than the sheltered cohort. Countering this outcome requires a proactive and collective pooling of resources and energy by the community. Continuing to acknowledge the critical need to respond to this crisis, the VA's One Team Operational Framework emphasizes engagement with Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

VA recognizes the need for street outreach and engagement to go beyond traditional approaches to meet the needs of the most vulnerable segment of the homeless Veteran population most effectively.

The Importance of Access to Permanent Housing

Access to permanent housing in a timely manner is critical for achieving an effective end to Veteran Homelessness. Access to permanent housing provides stability, safety, and a foundation for Veterans to be able to address other important needs and goals that they have – such as accessing healthcare, employment and benefits. While in many cases interim housing is the most immediate way for Veterans to exit unsheltered homelessness, Veterans must also have timely access to safe, stable permanent housing. To continue to build off the success of GVOTS events in FY25, a housing surge event can be conducted by VAMCs instead of, or in addition to, an Unsheltered Surge event as part of the Home for the Holidays initiative.

VA recognizes the challenging housing market for Veterans exiting homelessness. Housing Surge efforts are specifically designed to corral resources, expertise, and personnel to create new or more deliberate linkages within a defined period of time to housing owners, landlords and programs.

Home For The Holidays Initiative Overview

VAMCs will be required to complete one surge event between November 1, 2025, and January 31, 2026.

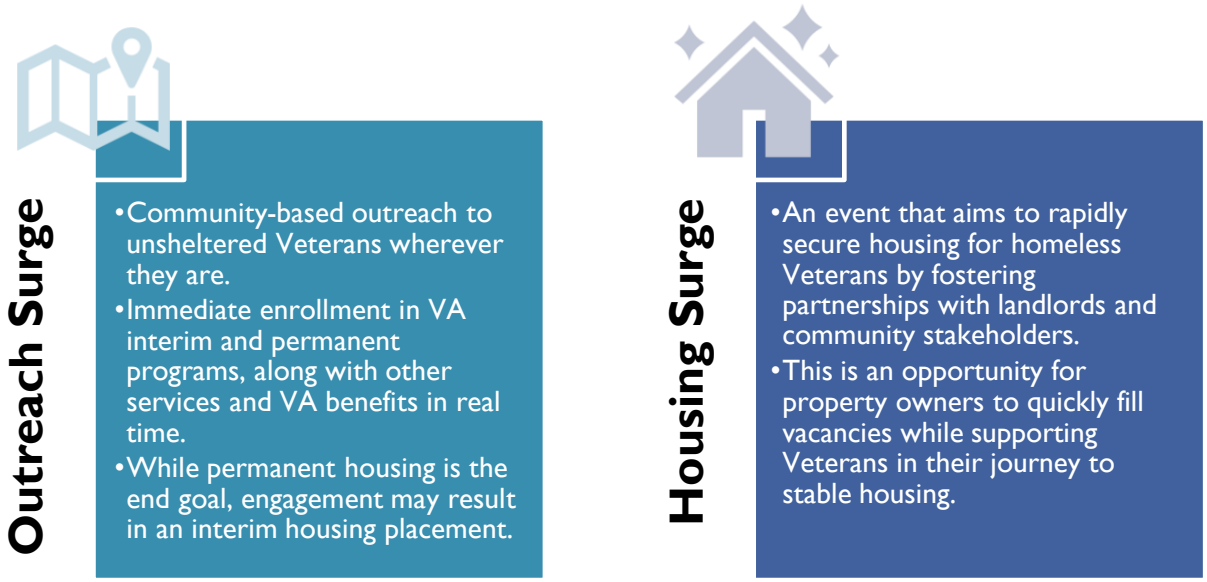
For the Home for the Holidays surge event sites can choose to host one of the following events:

- An unsheltered outreach surge event, structured in a similar way to the FY 2025 GVOTS surge.
- A housing surge event, with an emphasis on immediately connecting literally homeless Veterans to permanent housing units with a focus on Veterans who are unsheltered, those who were placed in interim housing during past surges, and Veterans with a HUD-VASH voucher or are enrolled with SSVF.
- Two separate events, one being an unsheltered outreach surge event and the other being a housing surge event.

  Or

- A combined event encompassing both an unsheltered surge and housing surge focused on outreach to unsheltered Veterans and same-day permanent housing placements.

Distinctions Between an Outreach Surge and a Housing Surge



Sites should consider which event or combination of events is the best fit based on available data on resources and needs, including the number of unsheltered Veterans, Veterans in interim housing, Veterans enrolled in housing programs but not leased up, available HUD-VASH vouchers or SSVF resources, etc.

Key Components of All Surge Events	**Key Components of an Outreach Surge**
✓ A commitment of available resources by all providers to accelerate the homeless response and lower barriers. ✓ Same-day placement into interim housing and/or permanent housing. ✓ Refinement of housing and service partnerships. ✓ Use of the BNL and Case Conferencing meetings for identifying Veterans. ✓ Streamlining enrollment and housing protocol ✓ Coordinate stability services and other referrals ✓ Evaluate what worked, key gaps in housing connections, and areas for improvement.	✓ Proactive and coordinated street outreach to Veterans where they are in the community. ✓ Staff expertise and deep awareness of outreach practices and approaches
	Key Components of a Housing Surge
	✓ Dedicated pool of housing units available for same-day move- in. ✓ Staff expertise and deep awareness of the intersection of housing owners and participant housing options.

Unsheltered Surge

Unsheltered Surge Overview

An unsheltered surge focuses on three primary target outcomes:

1. Hosting a dedicated outreach surge event.
2. Moving unsheltered Veterans into interim housing.
3. Enrolling Veterans into permanent housing programs.

Unsheltered Veteran Surge events are focused on engaging unsheltered Veterans through proactive street outreach, enrolling them in a same-day interim housing program, and putting them on a path to permanent housing ideally using co-enrollment strategies.

While communities should always be focused on ending unsheltered homelessness among Veterans, Unsheltered Surge events put a more intentional focus on this specific subpopulation. A successful Unsheltered Surge event makes a direct, measurable, and meaningful impact on Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness in a defined period of time with a defined set of practices working as One Team.

Refer to **Appendix A** for the biggest take-aways and sustained practices shared by communities from their GVOTS surge events.

Key Components of a Successful Unsheltered Surge

1. Proactive and coordinated street outreach to Veterans where they are in the community.
2. A commitment of available resources by all agency providers to accelerate the homeless response system by lowering barriers.
3. Same-day placement into interim housing and same-day enrollment into permanent housing programs for Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness, with an emphasis on quickly placing Veterans in permanent housing.

Key Starter Questions for Unsheltered Surge Planning:

BNL

1. Who are the unsheltered Veterans that we want to target during the outreach surge?
2. What are their housing barriers to same-day enrollment, if any (pets, partners, property, etc.)?
3. What can we plan in advance to address those barriers to facilitate same-day enrollment?
4. Who can fill in some of those gaps and is not involved yet? How can we get them

involved?

Coordinated Outreach

1. Where are our hot spots with the greatest number of Veterans, and/or where are there Veterans with whom we have not engaged yet?
2. Who will take which hot spot(s)?
3. How do we incorporate Veterans with lived experience in planning and outreach to Veterans?

Low Barrier

1. What barriers are currently in place to connecting Veterans to my agency's programs/ services?
2. How can my agency lower these to increase access?

Communication and Care Coordination

1. How will our One Team make decisions? How will decisions be communicated?
2. How and when will we check in before and after each day of outreach for case conferencing and to adjust our strategy, as needed?
3. How will we share real-time bed availability during outreach (group text, apps, etc.)?
4. How will we verify Veteran status during the event (SQUARES, member services, etc.).

Housing Surge

Housing Surge Overview

Communities may choose to conduct a housing surge event instead of, or in addition to, an unsheltered surge event. A Housing surge is a concentrated, time-limited event through which key partners work together to connect Veterans to a pre-identified pool of available housing units with the goal being to house a large group of Veterans in a short period of time. Housing surges expedite the housing process by streamlining access to available units. Collaborating with your One Team partners and having landlords and property managers with pre-inspected units ready for immediate same-day move-ins is the key to hosting a successful housing surge event.

A housing surge brings together VA, local governments, housing providers, nonprofits, landlords and Veteran-serving organizations under the One Team framework to focus resources and attention on housing placements over a defined, intensive period of time.

Refer to **Appendix A** for some example Housing Surge events.

Key Components of a Successful Housing Surge

1. Convene Partners

Examples:

- HCHV
- HUD-VASH
- SSVF
  - Case managers
  - Housing navigators
- GPD
- Public Housing Agencies (PHAs)
- CoC Representatives

2. Define Parameters of your Housing Surge

Examples:

- Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- Veterans housed in EHA, GPD or other interim settings

3. Conduct outreach to local landlords.

- Utilize SSVF landlord incentives to the extent possible for recruitment efforts.
- Adapt these landlord engagement tools to share with landlords
  - How Landlords Can Help End Veteran Homelessness
  - How to Become a Landlord, flyer
  - Benefits of Becoming a Landlord, flyer
  - Landlord FAQs
- Designate a lead/leads to centralize landlord recruitment.

4. Create a pool of vacant units committed to serving surge participants.

- Consider HUD-VASH PBV units with vacancies

5. Use your quality BNL and designate specific case conferencing meetings leading up to the event to identify Veterans to be housed during the housing surge event.
6. Streamline enrollment and housing protocol into programs and activities.

- Create a process map
  - Identify steps in the housing process, determine how each step can be streamlined, and what will occur before and during the surge.
  - If using HUD-VASH vouchers, consider how the PHA can best support

and what processes will need to be fast tracked or streamlined to allow for immediate move-in.

7. Coordinate services and other referrals to ensure Veterans have access to health care, income, legal and other services as they obtain and retain their permanent housing
8. Track outcomes and evaluate what worked, challenges encountered in making housing connections, and areas for improvement following the event.

Key Starter Questions:

BNL

1. Which Veterans could move in today if a unit were available for them that met their needs and wants?
2. What are their housing barriers to identifying a unit, if any (pets, partners, property, etc.)?
3. What can we plan for in advance to address potential barriers to facilitate same-day permanent housing move-in?
4. Who can fill in some of those gaps and is not involved yet? How can we get them involved?

Unit and Landlord Pooling

1. What landlords and property managers have we worked with in the past that we could engage for this event?
2. Will our PHA(s) partner with us to pre-inspect and hold some units for the event?
3. What marketing materials would support our effort?
4. What incentives can my agency's programs provide to landlords/to Veterans?

Low Barrier

1. What barriers exist that prevent Veterans from accessing my agency's programs and services?
2. How can my agency lower these barriers to increase access to permanent housing?

Communication & Care Coordination

1. What can my agency bring to the table to support Veterans' move-in costs?
2. How will our One Team make decisions? How will decisions be communicated?
3. How and when will we check in before and after the event and adjust our strategy, as needed?
4. How will we share real-time unit availability during the event (group text, apps, etc.)?
5. How can we incorporate Veterans with lived experience in planning for our event?

Combined Unsheltered and Housing Surge Event(s)

Combined Event Overview

While all VAMCs are required to host one unsheltered or one housing surge event, they also have the option to plan an event that incorporates elements of both the unsheltered and housing surge, if this is the right fit for their community. A combined unsheltered and housing surge event should incorporate the guidance above for the Unsheltered Surge as well as the guidance above for the Housing Surge. A combined event could focus on permanent housing placements for the Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness that are engaged during the unsheltered surge but could also be open to Veterans experiencing homelessness who are in a sheltered location and searching for a permanent housing unit. During the initial GVOTS surges in 2025, some sites elected to incorporate a housing surge into their event or events to ensure Veterans moved to permanent housing quickly.

Each VAMC will need to determine the most appropriate Home for the Holidays approach for their specific site.

Key Components of a Successful Combined Unsheltered and Housing Surge

1. Proactive and coordinated street outreach to Veterans where they are in the community.
2. A commitment of available resources by all agency providers to accelerate the homeless response system by lowering barriers.
3. Same-day placement to interim housing and same-day enrollment to permanent housing programs for Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness, with an emphasis on quickly placing Veterans in permanent housing.
4. Build or Refine your housing and service partnerships.
5. Create a pool of housing units/landlord relationships
6. Use your quality By Name List and Case Conferencing meetings for identifying Veterans.
7. Streamline enrollment and housing protocol into programs and activities.
8. Coordinate stability services and other referrals to ensure Veterans have access to health care, income, legal and other services as they obtain and retain their permanent housing
9. Evaluate what worked, key gaps in housing connections, and areas for improvement.

Reporting Requirements for Surge Events

Each VAMC will be required to record details about the event and report on the actual outcomes using an online *Home for the Holidays After Action Report Form* provided by HPO within 7 business days after the event occurs**.** Refer to Appendix D for a list of questions included in the After Action Report to assist in determining data collection and reporting requirements during the surge event.

One Team Operational Framework to Support VAMC Success

In FY 2026, the VA Homeless Program Office (HPO) will continue to focus on local system improvements by implementing a set of consistent Operational Outcomes and Standards that promote data-informed, strategic approaches to assist communities in ending Veteran homelessness. The Operational Outcomes and Standards define, assess. and validate a community's progress toward effectively ending Veteran homelessness. Find more information here.

One Team Approach

VA's One Team approach refers to coordinated, united actions and interconnection between programs as they work toward the joint mission to end Veteran homelessness. A One Team approach should use a low-barrier approach and provide Veterans, regardless of the Veteran's point of entry, with a coordinated process that develops a holistic, tailored housing and service plan centered on their personal choices.

The One Team Operational Framework Implementation Toolkit directly contribute to local community implementation of core practices that help local teams achieve its FY2026 Strategic Priorities and the VA Operational Outcomes & Standards for effectively ending Veteran homelessness.

Quality By-Name List

A BNL is a powerful tool that helps communities move homeless Veterans forward on the housing and service pathway. A BNL that is accurate and real-time can track Veteran progress between the key stages of each housing pathway. **VAMCs should take advantage of available information and BNL improvements as they work to plan for and implement their surge event**

HPO Consultation AND HPO Technical Assistance

HPO is fully committed to supporting the Home for the Holidays initiative and will leverage flexibilities whenever possible. If support is needed to clarify HPO program policies or issues about clinical care, please reach out to us.

If *your team is feeling stuck with planning for and implementing the Home for the Holidays Unsheltered Surge and/or Housing Surge event(s) reach out to your Network Homeless Coordinator to be connected with a technical assistance provider. We are here to brainstorm with you!*

Related Guidance, Directives, And Resources

- One Team Operational Framework Implementation Toolkit
- VA SSVF Emergency Housing Assistance Memo
- October 2023 HCHV/GPD Same-Day Access Memo (The link is accessible internally to the VA)
- SSVF HUD-VASH Collaborative Case Management Memo, Overview and Companion Guidance
- GPD HUD-VASH Collaborative Case Management

Appendices

Appendix A: Getting Veterans Off the Streets: Bright Spots and Best Practices

The August 7, 2025 All Hands on Deck National Call highlighted various communities' biggest takeaways and sustained practices from their Getting Veterans Off the Streets Unsheltered Surge event(s).

Houston, Texas

Biggest Takeaways

- Outreach is most effective when it is coupled with on-the-spot solutions to minimize the barriers the Veteran is experiencing, delays kill momentum and sometimes you can lose the window of opportunity to engage the Veteran to get off the street.
- Veterans are far more likely to accept help when they do not have to wait.
- Housing Surge events highlight the value of real-time bed availability, flexible intake procedures, and low barrier screening to get people inside that day.
- Meeting people where they are and providing immediate, low barrier pathways to shelter and housing, saves lives and restores dignity.

Sustained Practices

- Since the first housing surge, the team has developed strong partnerships with various community organizations, fostering an exceptional "One Team" approach.
- This collaboration has led to successful same-day housing surges, resulting in Veterans being housed quickly and effectively. These partners are often just a phone call away, readily available to assist Veterans at the request of the VA Homeless Team.
- The Houston CRRC has conducted a monthly same-day housing event since October 2024.

Las Vegas, Nevada

Biggest Takeaways

- Engaged with Veterans outside of the "normal working hours", during dinner time and when shelters open. Partnered with other Veteran providers to best meet the needs of all Veterans.
- Had outreach teams consisting of different roles, disciplines and organizations helped to best meet each Veteran's individualized needs in real-time.
- Held beds until later in the day for Veterans who are unsheltered.
- SSVF partners had landlords with units ready for move-in and were able to place several Veterans in same-day housing with Rapid Re-Housing.
- Identified and VA verified 53 unsheltered Veterans not on the BNL – reviewing local BNL process to ensure all unsheltered Veterans are captured, even if they do not typically

engage with services.

Sustained Practices

- Collaborative outreach teams that consist of staff members from the VA, SSVF providers, and peer support to go out together as a team.
- Completing the HOMES while doing street outreach as it is more time efficient. Found that Veterans are less likely to refuse services when it was done this way.
- Peer Support Specialists are connected to Veterans through every step of the enrollment and referral process.
- Plan to continue future unsheltered surges, quarterly or semi-annually.

Gainesville, Florida

Biggest Takeaways

- How fast Veterans can get through the system when we work closely together and focus on the goal of serving and housing Veterans alongside community partners.
- During the surge, a Veteran completed the following steps, all in one day:
    - Assessed by Outreach,
    - Referred, screened, and accepted into HUD-VASH,
    - Referred and accepted into SSVF, including EHA placement, and,
    - Referred to the Public Housing Authority and issued a voucher.

Sustained Practices

During both Surge events, GPD grantees were present to do same-day screenings/admissions. This reiterated to their community partners that being homeless is a crisis and screenings can be completed rather quickly.

The Coordinated Entry Specialist now tracks unsheltered Veterans in their coverage area so they can target outreach engagement efforts, including community partnership for street outreach.

Their CERS/GPD partners have been meeting with the VA liaison and SSVF representative (at least once per month) to ensure Veterans are moving along in the housing process. This collaboration has improved communication between programs, which has led to Veterans having a better understanding, ultimately resulting in faster lease-ups!

Washington, D.C.

Biggest Takeaways

- Consolidated version of the work the community does every day, just in a more contained setting where they could do more all at once.
- The pre-work and pre-planning made a huge difference –the details mattered.
    - Used the BNL to target unsheltered Veterans and engage prior to surge dates to build rapport in advance.
    - Collected open permanent housing slots (VASH/SSVF) and pre-matched Veterans

to those slots.

- The extras at the event (food, music, dancing, giveaways) were essential for creating a feeling of hopefulness and building a sense of community for folks who may often be isolated.
- In addition to the main surge, we had two additional days focused on follow-ups with the Veterans who they identified but could not engage or house on the day of the main event.
- Worked with GPD and CRS programs to allow for same-day access.

Sustained Practices

- Inviting community outreach teams to join Veteran specific outreach meetings moving forward.
- Each agency having a VA PoC connected to them.
- Taking an expansive look at the unsheltered population in DC and adding and flagging them on the BNL.
- Identifying Veterans who need more engagement, case conferencing and those who can be housed more quickly.

Norman, OK and Shawnee, OK

Biggest Takeaways

- Being in the right place at the right time. Making time for outreach for the GPD program.
- The encouragement and support they provided to each other while supporting people in need was inspiring. It was very impactful to meet with people in their environment and their space.
- We can and should work together to house Veterans. There are many "barriers" that create delays where it takes anywhere from 45-90 days to house someone - but during the surge all of those barriers were set aside, and they accomplished them same-day.
- It is amazing what can happen when there is a good plan with all the necessary players (VA programs, SSVF, eligibility, VBA, etc.) present and working together.

Sustained Practices

- I want the partnerships with other agencies to continue.
- Continue the same practices on a more regular basis to help move housing more quickly along.
- Continue to coordinate outreach efforts to allow them to reach more places and see more people.
- Having dedicated time in schedules for outreach, dedicated to a different community each week.
- Having consistent outreach activities – the importance of being a consistent presence in a community/area to build rapport and trust with those experiencing homelessness as well as with local community partners who are engaging/providing.

Cheyenne, WY, Fort Collins, CO and Greeley, CO

Biggest Takeaways

- **Innovative Approach:** Traditional methods do not adequately address the needs of unsheltered Veterans. A creative, flexible, persistent, and patient approach is essential, alongside real-time community responses.
- **Enhanced Partnerships:** Even strong partnerships have room for improvement. The surge highlighted opportunities to fine-tune coordination. It revealed that not all partners consistently communicated a Veteran's status to the VA, emphasizing the need for open communication. This helped identify a highly vulnerable Veteran that was previously overlooked.
- **Proactive Steps:** If there is any indication that an individual might be a Veteran, it is crucial to bypass any procedural barriers and proceed with possible next steps. Exploring all avenues of eligibility within VHA, SSVF, and other services (including SQUARES, VIS, and VBMS) is important. Perceived barriers should not hinder action.
- **Targeted Outreach:** Extended events in areas with fewer Veterans may not be necessary. Focusing efforts on regions with higher Veteran concentrations allows for repeated engagement opportunities. In specific areas, dedicating blocks of time to certain locations ensures Veterans are not missed.
- **Tailored Strategies:** Community differences necessitate tailored outreach strategies. Surge efforts must be customized to meet the unique needs of each community.
- **Real-Time Responses**: The ability of all community programs to respond in real-time was a critical factor in our success.

Sustained Practices

- **Regular Bi-Annual Events:** For areas with high concentrations of unsheltered Veterans, bi-annual events are recommended. They plan to strengthen their street outreach efforts, supported by increased full-time equivalents (FTE) in HCHV (previously just 1 FTE).
- **Outreach and Case Management:** For the most vulnerable Veterans, they have established a clear outreach follow-up plan, incorporating HCHV case management and peer support. They have increased visit frequencies for those identified, with plans for permanent housing interventions.
- **Real-Time Flexibility:** Utilizing real-time flexibility, such as same-day housing referrals (HUD-VASH and SSVF) and EHA placements, enables them to build rapport and engage in service recovery effectively.

Community Housing Surge Examples

Population-Specific One-Day Surges - Boston

The City of Boston and a host of partners have successfully implemented single-day Housing Surge events, bringing together a variety of housing and services partners enabling individuals experiencing homelessness to lease up into housing and enroll in supportive services same-day. They have targeted various populations including

Veterans.

For more information, see the following resource:

- PowerPoint Presentation

100-Day Challenges

100-Day Challenges were started by the RE!NSTITUTE, and are another model for quickly housing an ambitious number of people experiencing homelessness through an intensive, collaborative effort. In these challenges, community teams set ambitious housing targets for a specific population, develop innovative ways to collaborate to expedite housing processes and placement, and regularly monitor progress against their goals. These 100-Day Challenges have been employed by communities across the country for a variety of populations experiencing homelessness.

For more information, see the following resources:

- California Governor's 100-Day Challenge Initiative on Homelessness
- Veteran Homelessness 100-Day Challenges

Appendix B: Supporting Veterans Who Continually Decline Services

No matter what low-barrier, same-day options are offered, there will be Veterans who will decline services. Years of trauma, low trust for systems and untreated/under-treated conditions could contribute to the Veteran's reluctance to engage with service providers.

Here are some considerations to help you work through this situation:

- Talk to your fellow One Team members, your supervisor and/or your team; they may have ideas on approaches that you might not have considered. Case conferencing could be a good place to start.
- Be dependable: Establish a recurring outreach schedule and write it on the back of your business card, so Veterans know when and where to expect you.
- Take small steps to build a trusting relationship: See if the Veteran will accept snacks, water, donations (clothes, equipment, etc.), and/or your business card. Learn about their interests and find ways to connect with them to build trust and rapport.
- Use Motivational Interviewing techniques: Start with what the Veteran values and wants to change and help them plan to attain that goal. What does the Veteran want to take care of today? What is most important to the Veteran?
- Incorporate Trauma Informed Care (cue to 10:30 minute-mark) into your practice and agency culture.

Appendix C: Resources to Support Your Surge Planning and Implementation

Same-Day Access

As directed in HPO policy guidance and a VHA Memo, VA Homeless Programs that provide emergency and interim/transitional housing assistance should be able to provide *same-day access* to Veterans who are unsheltered and in need of a safe housing option.

To learn more about HCHV and GPD Same-Day access guidance please view the memo here: October 2023 HCHV/GPD Same-Day Access Memo (The link is accessible internally to the VA)

SSVF Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) should be used for Interim Housing only when appropriate HCHV CRS, community, or GPD options are not available or when the specific clinical needs of a Veteran household require hotel/motel EH and no such hotel/motel option exists other than SSVF EHA. Some examples of this clinical need may include keeping families together when community-based family shelter options do not exist in in the community, or if a chronically or long-term homeless Veteran with well-established resistance to program involvement is willing to accept EHA.

SSVF EHA is for those Veteran households seeking permanent housing (PH). Veterans enrolled in SSVF must have active case management that includes planning for PH placement designed to make the stay in EHA as brief as possible.

Suicide Prevention Resources

Chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat • Text 838255

VA homeless program staff working at surge events must be prepared to screen and evaluate suicide risk and provide appropriate interventions. VA homeless program staff must screen or evaluate for suicide risk with the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale Screener (C-SSRS) or the Comprehensive Suicide Risk Evaluation (CSRE).

Prior to your surge event, designate staff member(s) who will be available to complete the C- SSRS and CSRE, as well as staff who will oversee contacting first responders in

the event of a mental health or medical emergency. *The CSRE must be completed and documented on the same day as a positive C-SSRS Screen.* Also, ask if your local Suicide Prevention Coordinator is available to attend your surge event.

For further details on suicide prevention requirements and resources, please review the items below and contact your local Suicide Prevention Coordinator for assistance.

Suicide Risk Screening and Evaluation Resources for VA Staff:

- Suicide Risk Screening and Evaluation in VA Homeless Programs: July 30, 2025,
    - Recording
    - PowerPoint Presentation
- Homeless Programs Hub - Suicide Prevention Page
    - Risk ID SharePoint

Suicide Prevention Resources Available to Grantees, Contractors, and Partners

- VA S.A.V.E. Training: Learn to identify at-risk Veterans and use S.A.V.E. steps to help make a difference.
    - Request live training from local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators.
    - Access a recorded S.A.V.E. training at the PsychArmor website.
- VA Suicide Prevention Resource Locator
- Suicide Risk Management Consultation Program: The Suicide Risk Management Consultation Program (SRM) provides free consultation to both VA and community providers.
- Reach Out: Resources for supporting Veterans through different challenges and stressors.
- KeepItSecure: Resources for secure firearm storage and lethal means safety.
- Make the Connection: More than 1,000 videos of Veterans and their loved ones talking about their experiences, challenges, and recovery.

Printable Tools for Use in the Field:

- Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale Screener (C-SSRS)
- Comprehensive Suicide Risk Evaluation (CSRE)
- Safety Plan
- Risk Stratification Guide

Appendix D: Home for the Holidays Surge Event Form Reference

Event Logistics

In which community did the surge event take place?

What type of surge event did your location hold? (i.e., unsheltered surge, housing surge, both unsheltered and housing surge)

When did the surge event start?

What was the duration of the surge event?

During this Surge Event

How many Veterans were engaged?

How many Veterans were placed in Grant and Per Diem (GPD)?

How many Veterans were placed in Health Care for Homeless Veterans Contract Residential Services (HCHV CRS)?

How many Veterans were placed in Supportive Services for Veteran Families Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA)?

How many Veterans were leased up in a permanent housing (PH) setting?

How many Veterans refused housing placement?

What were the reasons Veterans refused offers for VA housing? (i.e., to remain with partner, pet care, shelter curfew, rules of behavior, storage of belongings, distance/location, wait time too long, other).

Additional Information

Were Veterans accepted into an MHRRT program (from the surge event)?

Did VBA participate in the surge event?

Did medical providers participate in the surge event?

Please specify if HPACT, HPACT MMU, PACT, HUD-VASH Nursing, Community Healthcare providers, or other.

Barriers Identified

What were the barriers to placing unsheltered Veterans in HCHV CRS and/or GPD housing?

What were the barriers to placing unsheltered Veterans in PH subsidies or settings?

Data Tracking and Case Conferencing

Were newly identified Veterans placed on the by-name list (BNL)?

Has a process been established to conduct ongoing case conferencing with all Veterans engaged during the surge event?

Appendix E: VA Acronyms

By Name List (BNL)

Continuum of Care (CoC)

Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC)

Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA)

Grant and Per Diem (GPD)

Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)

Home Based Primary Care (HBPC)

Homemaker Health Aid (HHA)

Homeless Patient Aligned Care Team (H-PACT)

Homeless Program Office (HPO)

In Home Supportive Services (IHSS)

Intensive Community Mental Health (ICMHR)

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – VA Supportive Housing (VASH)

Mobile Medical Unit (MMU)

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

Technical Assistance (TA)

VA Medical Center (VAMC)

VA Integrated Services Network (VISN)

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)