

Many faith-based organizations have well-established traditions of caring for the needy in their community. They often have a strong community base, a network of volunteers, and can easily transfer their skills, experience and compassion to serve homeless veterans. This brochure provides an introduction to how your organization can become more involved in helping homeless veterans in your community.

Understand the Issues

The first step to helping homeless veterans is to learn about the issues that affect them and the assistance programs that have proven to be most effective in supporting them. NCHV provides a wealth of information on homeless veteran issues, including basic facts, policies, federally funded assistance programs, and a list of local organizations that provide services to help them. Visit www.nchv.org.

Determine Local Need

The next step is to learn how many homeless veterans there are in your community and what resources there are to serve them. Ask the following questions:

- How many homeless people are there in your area? (*The most reliable federal data says one-third of the homeless men, and one-fourth of all homeless people in your community are likely to be veterans.*)
- What services are currently available?
- What other services are needed?
- Who is involved in serving homeless veterans in your community?
- What kind of assistance and resources do those organizations need?

Whom Should You Ask?

You can collect data and information from a variety of sources, including the Homeless Coordinator at the VA Medical Center nearest you; homeless coalitions for your city, county or state; local service providers (housing, employment, mental

health, and substance abuse); or formerly homeless veterans. Be sure to talk to or visit homeless assistance programs in your area.

- Department of Veterans Affairs – Contact the homeless veteran service coordinator at your nearest VA medical center. Go to www.va.gov, click on “Health,” then “Locate a VA Medical Center.”
- NCHV maintains a list of homeless service providers nationwide. Go to www.nchv.org, then click on “Locate a Community-based organization.”
- Department of Housing and Urban Development has a list of service providers in your municipality, county or state at www.hud.gov/community/index.cfm.
- State Department of Veterans Affairs – Every state has a director of veterans affairs, usually appointed by the governor. Find contact information for your state at www.nasdva.com.

Partner with Organizations

If there is a homeless veteran program in your area, or a homeless service provider that could help homeless veterans, there are many ways you and your organization can support and expand the services they offer.

1. Volunteer

- Assist shelter staff with daily activities or special events.
- Help prepare meals.
- Drive clients to medical appointments, job interviews, service agencies.
- Provide general office help.

2. Provide Counseling/Mentoring

Use your skills and experience to work with homeless veterans individually or in group settings. Mentoring activities include:

- Life skills training – personal finance, healthy menus, shopping, social skills
- Job skills development

- Resume preparation
- Substance abuse and mental health supports
- Tutoring

3. Donate Goods and Services

- Materials:
 - ✓ Food
 - ✓ Clothing
 - ✓ Medical supplies
 - ✓ Maintenance materials
 - ✓ Space to hold meetings, classes, clinics
- Services:
 - ✓ Barbers
 - ✓ Primary medical care
 - ✓ Dental and eye care
 - ✓ Custodial help
 - ✓ Organize health or education clinics

4. Participate in Stand Down

Stand Down is a 2- to 3-day outreach event in which hundreds of volunteers and service providers come together to provide homeless veterans and their families a secure place to receive nutritious meals, health care, clothing, legal assistance and a wide range of other services. To learn about current Stand Downs, dates and locations, visit www.nchv.org and click on “Stand Down,” or contact the Homeless Service Coordinator at the VA Medical Center serving your area.

5. Raise Funds

Donations are invaluable resources that contribute to the success and life of a program. Help an organization with its fundraising efforts directly or hold a special event to raise funds to donate to a homeless veterans program. Contact NCHV for a technical assistance brochure about fundraising.

6. Participate in Local Homeless Coalitions

Federal dollars for homeless programs are prioritized and disbursed through local homeless coalitions, and often veterans’ needs are not adequately represented.

Once you know how your community determines funding for homeless programs, you can be an effective voice to make sure veterans are not forgotten.

Your participation in a local coalition can help bring homeless veteran issues to the forefront in your community. National Coalition for the Homeless maintains an online directory of homeless and housing advocacy coalitions by state:
<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/state/>.

Starting a Homeless Veteran Program

You may determine that your community lacks adequate programs to address the needs of homeless veterans. If so, starting a homeless veteran program may be the only way to provide the help they need. Refer to the needs assessment you completed and determine who your local partners should be. Seek the advice of others who are already serving homeless veterans to develop ideas for your program.

- Contact NCHV for the brochure, “Starting a Homeless Veteran Program” and other brochures on organization development, management, governance and fundraising. Call (toll-free) 1-800-VET-HELP or send email to: nchv5@nchv.org.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development offers a guide on developing comprehensive care programs for veterans: www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/library/coc/index.cfm.

Seeking Federal Grants to Serve Homeless Veterans

If you have decided to start a program and will be seeking federal funds, there are several resources available that provide guidelines on federal grants and the application process.

- The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) has put together a comprehensive guide, “Guidance to Faith-Based

and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government.” The guide includes an overview of the federal grants process and a list of do’s and don’ts for faith-based organizations partnering with the federal government: www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/guidance/index.html.

- FBCI also maintains a list of federal grants to address homelessness, including a full description and contact information for each program. Go to: www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/grants-catalog-homelessness.html.
- NCHV’s website provides information on federal grants to serve homeless veterans specifically. Go to: www.nchv.org, click “Help for Community Based Organizations,” and then “Federal Grants for Homeless Veteran Service Providers.” Grants are posted on the website as soon as Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs) are published in the *Federal Register*.

Additional Resources

NCHV’s website provides links to a variety of online resources, including veterans service organizations, local service providers, and Federal agencies (VA, HUD, HHS, DOL, SSA) offering programs to veterans and organizations that support them. Go to www.nchv.org.

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Community Connections Clearinghouse has several publications to help homeless veteran service providers. Visit www.comcon.org/pubs/publist.pdf.
- The Foundation Center offers a variety of free courses and is a good place to begin research on corporate and private funding sources: www.fdncenter.org.

**This brochure was produced
in partnership with the
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Faith-Based Organizations Helping Homeless Veterans



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