

## NCHV eNewsletter

July 2015



### **NCHV Announces Introduction of Permanent Legislative Fix to Protect VA Homeless Program Eligibility for “OTH” Veterans**

#### **Policy Update**

NCHV is very pleased to announce that Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI) have introduced legislation that would ensure the eligibility for VA homeless services of veterans with “Other Than Honorable” discharges.

The “Homeless Veterans Services Protection Act of 2015” (S. 1731) would clarify the original intent of Congress that the Grant and Per Diem (GPD), GPD Special Needs, and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) programs serve all veterans with anything other than a Dishonorable discharge, regardless of a veteran’s VA healthcare eligibility. Furthermore, S. 1731 removes the requirement that a veteran serve in the military for two years in order to be eligible for these three VA homeless programs.

This legislation would not extend eligibility for these programs to those who received dishonorable discharges, nor to those who were discharged following courts-martial. Neither would this legislation extend any benefits (including healthcare, pensions, or any other veteran’s benefits) to these veterans, other than access to the GPD, GPD Special Needs, and SSVF programs. The bill ensures that our communities can continue to care for veterans in their time of need as we have for over 20 years.

For background on this issue, [click here](#).

In spite of the long history of these homeless programs serving veterans with “Other Than Honorable” discharges, a recent Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General report found an uneven record of compliance with that policy. The report found that at 15 VA Medical Centers across the country, VA officials had been excluding veterans from their homeless programs based on their discharge status. At one location this process had been erroneously occurring for more than six years. To redress this failure, S. 1731 would also ensure that there is never another instance of confused policy by requiring VA-wide training on the updated VA homeless programs eligibility.

As we reach the end of the Five-Year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness, it is increasingly important that we retain the ability to serve homeless veterans with “Other Than Honorable” discharges. Those who receive them make up 15% of the homeless veteran population across the country. In some urban locales, that number can be as high as 30% of the area’s population of homeless veterans.

NCHV expresses its deepest gratitude to Senators Murray and Hirono for their work on this issue, and calls on the Senate to take up consideration of this important bill.

To view the bill, [click here](#). To view the press release on the bill distributed by Senator Murray's office, [click here](#).

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## HUD Releases Short Term Outcomes Report from Family Options Study

The Family Options Study is a multi-site random assignment experiment designed to study the impact of various housing and services interventions for homeless families. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) launched the Family Options Study in 2008 in response to Congressional direction and with the goal of learning more about the effects of different housing and services interventions for homeless families.

Between September 2010 and January 2012, a total of 2,282 families (including over 5,000 children) were enrolled into the study from emergency shelters across twelve communities nationwide and were randomly assigned to one of four interventions: community-based rapid re-housing (CBRR), project-based transitional housing (PBTH), permanent housing subsidy (SUB), and usual care (UC).

HUD recently released a short-term outcomes report from the study, titled Short-Term Impacts of Housing and Services Interventions for Homeless Families. The report presents the short-term outcomes of the families enrolled in the Family Options Study, documenting how families are faring approximately 20 months after random assignment to one of the four interventions. Outcome measures fall within five domains: housing stability; family preservation; adult well-being; child well-being; and self-sufficiency. The collection of extensive cost data for each of the interventions tested enables the calculation of the costs that can be tied to each of the interventions, and in turn, used to understand the cost of achieving the outcomes observed. The study resulted in strong and significant findings, particularly related to the power of offering a voucher to a homeless family. HUD anticipates releasing the "long-term" outcomes of families within the next two years, and these findings will document how families are faring a full three years after random assignment, and how the costs of the different groups of families continue to evolve.

Findings in the study reinforce the effectiveness of programs in place through Opening Doors. Some of the key findings include:

- Families in the study assigned to receive permanent housing subsidies achieved higher rates of housing stability, greater improvements in well-being for both the adults and children, lower rates of child separation, and higher child school attendance.
- Families in the study who were assigned to a rental subsidy received it fairly quickly and directly, while families assigned to receive transitional housing or rapid re-housing did not access that assistance quickly or directly.
- Many families who were assigned to rapid re-housing or transitional housing never received those interventions or were also given other interventions for which they had not been prioritized.

View the full report for a much more in-depth look at this study: [Download the Short-term Outcomes Report](#)

On July 8, 2015, HUD hosted a [public briefing](#) on the short-term outcomes of the Family Options Study. Watch a recording of the webcast [here](#), and listen to a presentation of the study findings from the research team, as well as a moderated Q&A with Federal leaders working to address homelessness.

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## HUD and VA Announce Additional Vouchers to Help Homeless Veterans

**Estimated 122 additional vouchers to house veterans in 8 states**

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have announced a second round of funding to help provide permanent homes to an estimated 122 veterans experiencing homelessness in eight states. The rental assistance is provided through the [HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing \(HUD-VASH\) Program](#) which combines rental assistance from HUD with case management and clinical services provided by VA.

"Today is another important step in honoring the service and sacrifice of the brave men and women of our Armed Forces," said Secretary Julián Castro. "HUD and its local partners are determined to give every veteran the opportunity to secure a safe and stable place to call home."

"The Department of Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development and our federal and local partners should be proud of the gains made reducing veteran homelessness," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald, "but so long as there remains a veteran living on our streets, we have more work to do. The vouchers made available today are a vital tool to making sure veterans across the country have a home."

In April, HUD awarded \$65 million to help more than 9,300 homeless veterans find a home. That funding ensured that communities could provide the critically needed housing assistance and case management services to those veterans and their families experiencing homelessness.

Since 2008, more than 79,000 vouchers have been awarded and approximately 90,000 homeless veterans have been served through the HUD-VASH program. Rental assistance and supportive services provided through HUD-VASH are a critical resource for local communities in ending homelessness among our nation's Veterans.

In the HUD-VASH program, VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) assess veterans experiencing homelessness before referring them to local housing agencies for these vouchers. Decisions are based on a variety of factors, most importantly the duration of homelessness and the need for longer term, more intensive support in obtaining and maintaining permanent housing. The HUD-VASH program includes both the rental assistance the voucher provides and the comprehensive case management that VAMC staff offers.

Veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program rent privately owned housing and generally contribute no more than 30 percent of their income toward rent. VA offers eligible homeless veterans clinical and supportive services through its medical centers across the U.S., Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

To view a list of the vouchers awarded, [click here](#).

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## DOL Releases New Webinar in "Promoting Employment for Homeless Veterans" Series

New webinar recording available from DOL, NVTI series

The Department of Labor (DOL) and National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) have developed a series of webinars supporting employment for homeless veterans. This webinar series is supported by the NCHV TA Center.

Designed as an education tool for American Job Center Staff, the webinars are a great free resource for service providers. In addition to providing training on employment tools and interventions for new staff members and partner agencies, the webinars can provide a foundation to strengthen your relationship with local AJC staff.

There are now five webinars available through this series – Promoting Employment for Homeless Veterans, Overcoming Barriers to Employment, Building Partnerships with Service Providers, Assisting Ex-Offenders, and the newest addition -Employer Engagement. The webinars are prerecorded and are available at <http://www.nvti.ucdenver.edu/HomelessVeteransWebinars.htm>. Find your local AJC here: <http://jobcenter.usa.gov/>.

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## Report: Changing Veteran Population Requires Resources Tailored to Meet their Full Range of Housing Needs

From the National Housing Conference

**WASHINGTON** — One size does not fit all when it comes to housing and supportive services for America’s veterans. A new report released by the National Housing Conference’s Center for Housing Policy details how the changing veteran population requires changes in the housing options and supportive services made available to them after they return to civilian life.

[Housing and Services Needs of our Changing Veteran Population](#) examines the services currently available and offers policy recommendations to better serve three distinct veteran populations: older adult veterans, female veterans and post-9/11 veterans. While there are veteran housing and service programs currently available, the report finds that with the changing demographics of the veteran population, there is a need to look critically at these programs and find ways to enhance and improve them so that they better meet evolving needs.

“We often think too generally about veterans’ housing and other needs,” said Dr. Lisa Sturtevant, director of the Center for Housing Policy and coauthor of the report. “There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to serving the veteran population. The services that an older adult veteran requires may be very different from what female veteran with small children needs. It is important for policymakers, housers and service providers to understand the changing veteran population and to expand housing options and services to meet the varied needs.”

Read the report, including federal and local policy recommendations, here: [http://www.nhc.org/VeteransHousingReport\\_final.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/VeteransHousingReport_final.pdf).

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## Funding Opportunities

**The Pollination Project's** goal is to support practical dreamers. They seek to fund projects in their earliest phases, including tangible things like infrastructure and outreach. For more information and to take an online eligibility quiz, [click here](#).

**The Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation** seeks to promote social justice and human rights by funding organizations that operate within five program areas: Jewish life, strengthening Israeli democracy, health and mental health, educational opportunity, and human rights. For more information, [click here](#).

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**National Coalition for Homeless Veterans**

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