Serving Homeless Veterans in Rural Programs

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WEBINAR:
Serving Homeless Veterans in Rural Programs

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Logistics

- Asking questions during the webinar
  - All participant phone lines are muted
  - You’ll be unable to ask questions by phone
  - Please type your question in the on screen chat box
  - There will be two opportunities during the webinar to ask questions

- Post webinar survey
  - Survey from Antonio Addessi, Program Assistant (NCHV)
Asking Questions During the Training

- Submit questions in the chat box on the webinar
- E-mail questions to Antonio Addessi at aaddessi@nchv.org
- Submit questions through the post-training survey
RURAL SERVICE STRATEGIES

Connecting Homeless Veterans to Services in Rural Areas
How different are they?

RURAL VS. URBAN HOMELESSNESS
Urban Homelessness

Homelessness is often assumed only to be an issue in urban areas. Urban Homelessness is more geographically concentrated and numerous, therefore more visible. Due to this, there are typically more supportive services available in urban areas.
Rural Homelessness

Although rural homeless populations may experience similar barriers to those that are located in urban settings, the barriers increase for those that are homeless in rural locations. Rural areas typically have less shelters and supportive service options available. Additionally, locating the homeless veterans in rural areas and linking them to services regularly proves difficult.
Point in time Count – Where are they?

Problems locating, defining, and regularly surveying the rural homeless population have made calculating the homeless population with certainty essentially impossible, with the estimates primarily relying on counts of persons using services that are often inaccessible to those in rural areas.
Why it difficult to obtain an accurate count

- Rural homeless are more likely to live in places we do not see such as campgrounds, abandoned buildings, cars, woods, and other places not meant for human habitation.
- Many families and individuals in rural areas live doubled up or in substandard housing.
- The definition of “literally homeless” does not fit well within the reality of rural homelessness.
- Low counts may exclude many rural communities from being eligible for federal dollars to provide needed housing and supportive services.
Rural challenges
Primary challenges

- Access to services
- Affordable housing
- Lack of employment options
- Low wage
- Transportation
Access to services

Rural areas tend to lack the infrastructure to provide fast comprehensive services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordability remains the most significant housing challenge in rural America. Additionally, access to housing programs are limited in most rural areas.
Lack of Employment Options

It is challenging for local businesses to turn a profit in a rural area. This leads to less job opportunities. Jobs available usually offer low wages that cannot meet the individuals financial needs in order to maintain housing.
Transportation

Mass transit is rarely available in rural areas. Individuals are forced to find their own transportation such as walking, riding a bike, or relying on a friend, family member, or co-worker to meet their transportation needs.
Solutions
Solutions

• Know your area and its challenges
  • Capacity Building
  • Collaborations
  • Coordinated Assessments
Know your area

Know what you are up against. Knowing your community is a key component in battling homelessness.

- Identify what services are available in your area and determine the services needed.
- Create a area resource manual
- Contact other providers and work together to best serve the homeless population
- Resources are sparse, don’t duplicate!
Capacity building

Service provider budgets are tight, but there are ways to build capacity that don’t break the bank.

- AmeriCorps VISTA Program
- VA Work Study Programs
- Volunteer Drives
- Advisory Boards
AmeriCorps VISTA make a year-long, full-time commitment to serve on a specific project at a nonprofit organization or public agency. They focus their efforts to build the organizational, administrative, and financial capacity of organizations that fight illiteracy, improve health services, foster economic development, and otherwise assist low-income communities. For more information visit: http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri corps
The VA Workstudy program provides an allowance for eligible veterans accepted into the Workstudy program. Eligible veterans are full-time or 3/4-time veteran students in a college degree, vocational, or professional program, they can “earn while they learn” with a VA work-study allowance. Services performed under a VA work-study program must be related to VA work. For more information, eligibility requirements, and examples of VA work can be found at: http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/workstudy.asp
Volunteer drives

Volunteer drives are a way for service providers to build capacity. Volunteer's are looking for a way to serve their community.
Advisory boards

Advisory Boards are a great way to build your visibility in the community. They can assist with:

- Leading and planning fundraising campaigns
- Seek donations from area businesses and philanthropists
Collaborate

Why Collaborate?
• There is no one answer or one fix to ending homelessness. Typically an individual is in need of multiple services to break the cycle of homelessness.
• There are not many resources in rural areas, sharing resources is an important step in meeting our goal.
• Demand for services is up, along with competition for financial resources, making the drive towards efficiency increasingly important. This is even more prominent in rural areas.
• Duplication of services is viewed as wasteful.

COLLABORATION:
Two or more people working together towards shared goals
Transportation Collaboration

- VA transportation services
- City Bus or taxi services
- Local non emergency medical transportation entities
Employment collaboration

- Community College Veteran programs
- VA Community Employment Coordinators
- Homeless Veteran Reintegration Programs
  - Goodwill Career Centers
COLLEGE IS FOR VETERANS TOO!

Employment collaboration

Thanks to programs like Upward Bound, GI Bill, and Pell Grants, veterans can work towards a degree. A degree, especially in a rural area can lead to employment at a livable wage.
Housing collaboration

- Transitional housing
- Permanent housing
- Transition in Place
  - HUD/VASH
- Homeless to home ownership programs
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families programs (SSVF)
Coordinated Assessments

Coordinated Assessment Systems is the CoC's approach to organizing and providing services to persons experiencing a housing crisis within a specific geographic area.

Using a Coordinated Assessment providers can adopt a “no door closed” policy to ensure whatever door a veteran walks into, they are then assisted through all other doors of the process.
Coordinated Assessments

Using coordinated assessment tools can assist providers identify, track, and place individuals into the appropriate services, two tools that can be used are:

• Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT)
• Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
Coordinated Assessments

SPDAT is an evidence-informed approach to assessing an individual’s or family’s acuity. The tool, across multiple components prioritizes who to serve next and why, while concurrently identifying the areas in the persons/family’s life where support is most likely necessary in order to avoid housing instability.

Triage » Initial intake » Placement-focused assessment » Housing plan » Ongoing client assessment
Coordinated Assessments

HMIS is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. Each Continuum of Care is responsible for selecting an HMIS software solution that complies with HUD's data collection, management, and reporting standards.
Everyone should have a home

Veteran Homelessness is a persistent problem in rural America, by working together, identifying needs, and implementing collaborations we can continue striving to break the cycle of homelessness.
References

Google (pictures and images): www.google.com
Affordable Housing Finance: http://www.housingfinance.com/news/rural-housing-challenges_o
National Coalition for the Homeless: http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/rural.html
National Alliance to End Homelessness: http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/rural
AmeriCorps Vista: http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps
VA Work Study: http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/workstudy.asp
Prezi: https://prezi.com/0to3cer6hoos/copy-of-continuum-of-cares-coordinated-assessment-system/
HMIS: https://www.hudexchange.info/hmis/
Things to consider when serving in rural America:

- Engaging Your State Department of Veterans Affairs
- Creating Positive Partner Networks
- Understanding Transportation Challenges
  - Awareness of Transportation Services/Limitations/Gaps/ Alternatives
- Understanding Employment Challenges
  - Awareness of Labor Market Trends/In Demand & Decline Occupations
  - Employer Engagement (COC’S, EDB, Business Organizations/Affiliations)
Engaging Your State Department of Veterans Affairs

- WDVA has a Memorandum of Agreement with DOD for DPRIS DD214 database access (15-20 minutes to access DD214’s) with ROI from Veteran.
- Washington State Military Transition Council and Veterans Employee Resource Group
- DD214 Archive for Service Members Transitioning Out in Your State
- Financial, Transition, and Reintegration Programs
- State & Federal Level Advocacy & Awareness
- Trained Veterans Benefit Specialists
- Resource Guides/Contacts

http://www.dva.wa.gov/Vet_Inn_Pro.html
Creating Positive Partner Networks

- SSVF/HVRP/IVTP Grantees
- American Job Centers (DVOP/LVER)
- Community Action Programs
- Workforce Development Councils
- Chamber of Commerce
- VSO’s, Stand Downs, Rotary Clubs, Fraternal Organizations
- Disability Support Service Providers/Transportation Providers
- Energy Assistance Programs/Food Banks/Clothing Closets
- Shelters/HUD/Transitional Housing Providers
- Federal VA CEC’s, Patient Advocates, CBOC’s
- Faith Based Organizations
- Economic Development Boards

http://www.dva.wa.gov
SAMHSA Webinar Series on Rural Homelessness

- Visit Our Website for further resources on Rural Homelessness from SAMHSA

- Clicking the link here and registering brings you to the SAMHSA Rural Spotlight Series