#### 3. VBA Homeless Veteran Program

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| **Introduction** | This topic provides information on VBA’s Homeless Veteran Program (HVP), including* overview of homeless Veterans policy
* determining homeless Veteran status
* determining Veteran at imminent risk of homelessness status
* determining formerly homeless status
* overview of roles and responsibilities in the homeless program
* designation and role of the HVOC
* HVOC coordination duties with VHA, other federal agencies, and national Veterans advocacy groups
* HVOC coordination duties with state and local homeless programs
* HVOC coordination and outreach duties at regional offices where the position is not required
* role of the JIVC
* overview of JIVC duties
* role of the HVCC
* use of the homeless, hardship, and formerly homeless flashes
* overview of Homeless Program reporting, and
* jurisdiction of claims for benefits from homeless claimants
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| **Change Date** | April 9, 2015 |

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| **a. Overview of Homeless Veteran Policy** | In support of VA’s goal of eliminating Veteran homelessness, it is VBA’s policy to* accept a Veteran’s self-identification or any other information obtained by VBA as fact, which indicates the Veteran is
* homeless
* at imminent risk of homelessness, or
* formerly homeless
* have at least one full time employee assigned to oversee and coordinate homeless Veteran outreach at the 20 regional offices identified with the largest homeless Veteran population
* provide priority claims processing for all claims for benefits received by a homeless Veteran or Veteran at imminent risk of homelessness
* coordinate outreach efforts by VA to Veterans at imminent risk of homelessness at the national and local level, and
* maintain accountability mechanisms for reporting the number of currently homeless Veterans, Veterans at imminent risk of homelessness, and formerly homeless Veterans.
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| **b. Determining Homeless Veteran Status** | VBA qualifies a Veteran as homeless when a Veteran self-identifies as such, or when there is an indication the Veteran is * living in a primary nighttime residence not meant for human habitation, including examples such as a(n)
* car
* park
* abandoned building
* bus
* train station
* airport, or
* camping ground;
* living in housing designated to provide temporary living arrangements, including examples such as a(n)
* congregate shelter
* transitional housing, or
* hotel or motel paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs
* residing in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering an institution
* exiting an intuition without sufficient resources to prevent returning to such an environment
* receiving support from VA’s Homeless Program to maintain permanent housing, including examples such as a(n)
* Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Grant and Per Diem Program
* Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), or
* other programs within VA that support Veteran housing
* living with a family member or friend due to lack of his or her own housing or economic hardship, or
* fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence when there is evidence the Veteran has no other residence and lacks the resources including social support networks, to obtain permanent housing, or
* selects the homeless box on the VA Form 21-526EZ.

***References***: For more information on * HUD-VASH, see the [HUD-VASH Resource Guide for Permanent Housing and Clinical Care](http://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp), and
* SSVF, see [SSVF Grantee Resources](http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf_grantee_resources.asp).
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| **c. Determining Veteran at Imminent Risk of Homelessness Status** | VBA qualifies a Veteran at imminent risk of homelessness when a Veteran self-identifies as such, or if there is an indication of the following * the Veteran will imminently lose his or her primary nighttime residence, including
* owned, rented, or free permanent housing
* shared housing, and
* hotel or motel rooms *not* paid for by federal, state, or local government programs for low income individuals or charitable organizations
* the Veteran lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain permanent housing and no subsequent residence has been identified
* the Veteran resides in a public or privately operated shelter or institution
* the Veteran’s residence will be lost within 30-days of the date of notification of financial hardship to VA
* the Veteran has received notification that his/her right to occupy the current housing or living situation will be terminated
* the Veteran is exiting a publicly funded institution or system of care
* the Veteran has moved frequently because of economic reasons, or
* the Veteran lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness.

***Reference***: For more information on financial hardship status, see M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.D.3 |

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| **d. Determining Formerly Homeless Status**  | VBA qualifies a Veteran as formerly homeless when a Veteran self-identifies as such, or if there is an indication the Veteran is * living in a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence intended for human habitation
* the residence is a permanent place of residency, or
* indication the Veteran has the resources or support networks to obtain and sustain permanent housing without assistance from charitable organizations or federal, state, and local government programs.
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| **e. Overview of Roles and Responsibilities in the Homeless Program** | The Benefits Assistance Service (BAS) maintains oversight of VBA’s Homeless Program. The table below outlines the roles and responsibilities within VBA’s Homeless Program. |

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| **The…** | **Responsibilities Include…** |
| VBA Homeless Program Manager | * ensuring development, implementation, and oversight of VBA’s Homeless Program
* serving as the VBA’s liaison to VA’s Homeless Veteran Advisory Committee (HVAC)
* chairing the VBA Homeless Program work group to ensure synchronization of VBA’s Homeless Program’s benefits and outreach across all business lines
* ensuring development and implementation of annual training for VBA’s Homeless Program, and
* maintaining accountability mechanisms for reporting for VBA’s Homeless Program, including the number of
* currently homeless Veterans
* Veterans at imminent risk of homelessness, and
* formerly homeless.
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| Regional Office (RO) Directors (or designee) | * developing, implementing, and maintaining a location specific *Regional Office Homeless Veteran Program Plan*
* ensuring proper prioritization for claims identified as involving a homeless Veteran and Veterans at immediate risk of homelessness
* designating and maintaining accurate reporting of employees assigned to the following roles
* Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinator (HVOC) when required
* Justice Involved Veteran Coordinator (JIVC), and
* Homeless Veterans Claims Coordinator (HVCC).

***References***: For more information on * the *Regional Office Homeless Veterans Program Plan*, see the [VBA’s Homeless Veterans Program page](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/BAS/outreach/veterans/homeless/index.asp)
* claims prioritization for Homeless Veterans and Veterans at immediate risk of homelessness, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D.2
* requirements to maintain a full time HVOC, see M27-1, Part II, 2.2.g
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| **f. Designation and Role of the HVOC** | The HVOC is assigned to the Public Contact Team for ROs requiring the position. The HVOC’s basic responsibilities include conducting ongoing outreach effort to homeless Veterans. The detailed responsibilities of the HVOC are listed in each field office’s *Regional Office* *Homeless Veteran Program Plan,* allowing the role to adjust to* the local geographic area of jurisdiction
* distribution of the homeless Veteran population
* work location of the HVOC, and
* the total homeless Veterans outreach workload

The ROs listed in the table below are required to have a full-time HVOC |

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| Atlanta | Houston | New York | Seattle |
| Boston | Indianapolis | Oakland | Saint Louis |
| Chicago | Los Angeles | Philadelphia | Saint Petersburg |
| Cleveland | Nashville | Phoenix | Waco |
| Detroit | Newark | Roanoke | Winston-Salem |

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| ***Important***: All ROs *not* required to maintain a full time HVOC *must* appoint a HVCC in each benefit area.***References***: For more information on * the *Regional Office Homeless Veterans Program Plan*, see the [VBA’s Homeless Veterans Program page](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/BAS/outreach/veterans/homeless/index.asp), and
* legislative requirements see 38 § 2002
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| **g. HVOC Coordination Duties With VHA, Other Federal Agencies, and National Veterans Advocacy Groups** | The HVOC is responsible for maintaining an effective network, liaison and referral system with *active* programs providing services to homeless Veterans in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), other federal agencies and national Veterans advocacy groups to include* VHA homeless programs, such as
* Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)
* Social Work Service (SWS)
* Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) program
* Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO)
* Health Care for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Programs, and
* Readjustment Counseling Service (Vet Center) staff
* Housing and Urban Development-VA’s Supported Housing (HUD-VASH)
* Department of Labor (DOL) programs, such as
* Veteran’s Reintegration Program, and
* Jobs for Homeless Veterans Program
* Social Security Administration
* Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education, and Networking Groups (CHALENG) for Veterans, and
* Veterans Service Organizations.
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| **h. HVOC Coordination and Outreach Duties With State, and Local Homeless Programs** | The HVOC is responsible for coordinating homeless Veterans services with regional, state, municipal and community government programs as well as non-profit and charitable organizations. These programs and organizations will vary based on locality. To assist regional office staff and stakeholders with efficiently and effectively delivering services to homeless Veterans, the HVOC will* work closely with the staff of VAMC(s) to
* provide training on VBA benefits to local VAMC Homeless staff annually
* identify points of contacts for assisting Veterans obtain temporary housing
* provide support to local VAMC Homeless Veterans Resource Center (HVRC) at least once a quarter
* develop and establish local procedures for priority exam scheduling and warm handoffs between RO and VAMC staff for homeless and at imminent risk of homeless Veterans, and
* coordinate outreach efforts for Veterans at risk of homelessness being discharged or released from institution after inpatient psychiatric care, substance abuse treatment, or imprisonment by working closely with the VAMC Mental Health Service and Readjustment Counseling Service as necessary.
* contact and/or visit shelters and homeless service providers within the local jurisdiction on a regular basis
* coordinate with State Department of Veterans Affairs on benefits delivery
* attend reoccurring meetings and events relating to homelessness and local homeless programs and services, and
* develop and maintain a local resource directory of homeless shelters, day facilities, and service providers categorized by
* Shelters/facilities for women
* Shelters/facilities for women and children
* Shelters/facilities for men
* Shelters/facilities for men and children, and
* Shelters/facilities for families.
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| **i. HVOC Coordination and Outreach Duties at Regional Offices Where the Position is Not Required** | ROs *not* required to staff a full time HVOC *must* * provide a detailed delegation of the coordination and outreach duties of the HVOC in their *Regional Office Homeless Veteran Program Plan*, and
* appoint a HVCC in each business line within the RO.

***Reference***: For more information on the* *Regional Office Homeless Veteran Program Plan*, see the [VBA’s Homeless Veterans Program page](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/BAS/outreach/veterans/homeless/index.asp)
* the role of the HVCC, see M27-1, Part II, 2.2.l
* coordination and outreach duties of the HVOC, see
* M27-1, Part II, 2.2.g
* M27-1, Part II, 2.2.h, and
* M27-1, Part II, 2.2.i.
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| **j. Role of the JIVC** | The Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001, stated that “The Secretary shall carry out an outreach program to provide information to homeless Veterans and Veterans at risk of homelessness, including those being discharged and released from institutions after * inpatient psychiatric care
* substance abuse treatment, or
* *imprisonment*.

The program to support justice involved Veterans shall include at a minimum * provision of information about benefits available to eligible Veterans from VA, and
* contact information for local VA facilities, including
* medical facilities
* regional offices, and
* Vet Centers.”

***Notes***: * The JIVC is a collateral duty and it is similar to other RO outreach coordinators (e.g., women, homeless, elderly, etc.).
* Due to overlapping responsibilities the roles of HVOC and JIVC are frequently combined.

***Reference***: For more information regarding justice involved veterans, see 38 U.S.C. § 2002.  |

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| **k. Overview of JIVC Duties** | The duties of the JIVC include* provide information and/or training on VA benefits and services to community service providers and correctional officials
* visiting federal, state, and local correctional facilities, where feasible, and provide VA benefits information to incarcerated Veterans who are within 60 days of release.
* advising Veterans re-entering civilian life of VBA and VHA services, and at the request of the Veteran, assist in establishing eligibility for VHA and VBA services. These applications for benefits, to include reinstatement of benefits, will need to be received and prioritized in the same manner as for homeless Veterans.
* participating in outreach services to Veterans at risk of homelessness upon release from
* participation in Veterans Treatment Courts
* inpatient psychiatric care
* substance abuse treatment, or
* imprisonment

***Notes***: * The JIVC position is an additional duty (e.g. Elderly and Woman Veterans Coordinators).
* The JIVC position is frequently combined with HVOC position where full time homeless resources are available.
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| **l. Role of the HVCCs** | The role of the HVCC is to case manage claims for benefits from homeless Veterans and Veterans at imminent risk of homelessness, assuring* proper prioritization
* frequent follow up on pending actions
* use of telephone development whenever possible, and
* collaboration with VHA and other involved counterparts.

***Note***: Frequently, HVCCs supplement or act in the place of a full time HVOCs by participating in outreach activities as well as processing benefits.***Reference***: For more information on priority processing of compensation and pension claims, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D |

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| **m. Use of the Homeless, Hardship, and Formerly Homeless Flashes** | The RO’s HVOC, HVCCs or designee is responsible for identifying Veterans that are deemed homeless, at risk of homelessness, and formerly homeless, by ensuring the correct corporate flash is associated with the Veterans record.The table below outlines the proper use of flashes for the Homeless Veterans program. |

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| **If the Veteran Meets the…** | **Then ...** |
| homeless Veteran criteria | * use the *Homeless* corporate record flash, and
* the HOMELESS indicator in BIRLS on the MISC screen.

***Reference***: For more information on* determining homeless status, see M27-1, Part II, 2.2.b, and
* applying a corporate flash and the MISC screen in BIRLS, see the [SHARE User Guide](http://css.vba.va.gov/SHARE/).
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| at risk of homelessness criteria | use the *Hardship* corporate record flash***Note***: Use of the *Hardship* corporate record flash is not exclusive to the Homeless Veteran program.***References***: For more information on* determining the Veteran at Imminent Risk of Homelessness status, see M27-1, Part II, 2.2.c
* use of the *Hardship* corporate record flash outside the Homeless Veteran program, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D, and
* applying a corporate flash, see the [SHARE User Guide](http://css.vba.va.gov/SHARE/).
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| formerly homeless criteria | Use the *Formerly Homeless* corporate record flash.***Reference***: For more information on* determining Formerly Homeless status, see M27-1, Pat II, 2.2.d, and
* applying a corporate flash, see the [SHARE User Guide](http://css.vba.va.gov/SHARE/).
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| **n. Overview of Homeless Program Reporting** | RO Directors or their designee will ensure compliance with tracking and reporting Homeless Program data.All ROs will report homeless Veteran outreach activities and events in the *Outreach Submission Tool*, within five days of the activity. Outreach activities reported in the Outreach Submission Tool including* briefings
* conferences
* events
* meetings
* trainings, and
* town halls

The table below outlines data to be recorded in the Directory of Operational Resources (DOOR) system relating to service provided to homeless Veterans. |

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| **Information to Report in DOOR** | **Work Identifier (WID)** |
| The number of shelters for homeless contacted | Homeless Shelters Contacted, WID 7537.01 |
| The number of related community support or social service agencies contacted | Homeless Agencies Contacted, WID 7537.02 |
| The number of Veterans referred to and from the Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill (HCMI) Program, and the Department of Labor’s Jobs for Homeless Veterans Program | Referred to HCMI and DOL Programs, WID 7537.03 |
| The number of homeless seeking assistance from the regional office including personal and telephone | Number Seeking Assistance from RO, WID 7537.04 |

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| ***Reference***: For More information on DOOR Reports, see the [DOOR Reports page](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/22/EOU/ELR/DOOR/DOOR.html) on the Education Service Intranet site. |

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| **o. Jurisdiction of Claims for Benefits from Homeless Claimants** | The RO closest to the Veterans physical address is considered the station of jurisdiction (SOJ) for homeless and at imminent risk of homelessness Veterans claims. If the Veteran’s physical address changes while the claim is being processed, the SOJ will be the RO closest to the new address; the claim will be transferred immediately to the new SOJ. The RO HVCC is required to call and/or email the new SOJ’s HVCC advising of the transfer to ensure a seamless transition to the new location. Upon receipt of the claim, the SOJ’s HVCC will establish contact with the Veteran and inform him or her of the new claim location.The ROJ will expedite and provide priority processing for all homeless and at imminent risk of homelessness Veterans’ benefit claims. For business specific procedures use the table below |

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| **Benefit/Program Area** | **Procedural Guidance** |
| Compensation | M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D.2 |
| Education | [Education Service Publications](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/22/ref/index.html) |
| Fiduciary  | [Fiduciary Program Manual](http://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov) |
| Insurance | [WARMS: Life Insurance Materials](http://www.benefits.va.gov/warms/topic-life-insurance.asp) |
| Loan Guaranty  | [WARMS: Home Loans Materials](http://www.benefits.va.gov/warms/topic-homeloans.asp) |
| Pension  | M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D.2 |
| Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment | [M28R, Part IV, C.2.07](https://vaww.portal.va.gov/sites/VRWKM/M28/Part%20IV%20-%20Evaluation%2C%20Entitlement%2C%20and%20Rehabilitation%20Planning/Section%20C%20%E2%80%93%20Plan%20Development/M28R.IV.C.2.pdf) |

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| ***References***: * For more information on jurisdiction and transfer of claims, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 5
* For a list of HVCCs and HVOCs, see the [Homeless Coordinators Directory](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bas/outreach/veterans/homeless/home-index.asp).
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