

Chapter 3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program

Introduction	<p>This chapter provides information on the Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinator (HVOC) • HVOC coordination duties with Veterans Health Administration (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 Justice Involved Veteran Coordinators (JIVC) • overview of JIVC duties • role of the Homeless Veteran Claim Coordinators (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	July 27, 2020
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a. Overview of Homeless Veteran Policy

In support of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) 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

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

a. Overview of Homeless Veteran Policy (Continued)

- have at least one full time employee assigned to oversee and coordinate homeless Veteran outreach and referral services at the 20 regional offices identified with the largest homeless Veteran population as required in [38 U.S.C. § 2003 \(a\)](#)
- 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 who are homeless, at imminent risk of homelessness, or formerly homeless at the national and local level, and
- maintain case management coordination and accountability mechanisms for reporting the number of currently homeless Veterans, Veterans at imminent risk of homelessness, and formerly homeless Veterans assisted through expedited claims processing, referral services and/or outreach efforts.

References: [38 U.S.C. §§ 2002](#) and [2003](#)

b. Determining Homeless Veteran Status

In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as codified in ([42 U.S.C. § 11302 \(a\)](#)), 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;

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

b. Determining Homeless Veteran Status (Continued)

- 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 institution without sufficient resources to prevent returning to such an environment
- 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.

VBA also identifies a Veteran as homeless when the Veteran selects the homeless box on VA Form 21-526EZ and/or indicates that ANY of the above qualifications are present.

References:

- [38 U.S.C. § 2002](#)
 - [42 U.S.C. § 11302 \(a\)](#)
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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

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

**c. Determining
Veteran at
Imminent Risk
of
Homelessness
Status
(Continued)**

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 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, including release from incarceration
- the individual is transitioning from active duty service and has been identified as “at-risk”
- 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.

References: [42 U.S.C. § 11302](#); M21-1, III.ii.1.D.3 Claims Requiring Priority Processing because of Extreme Financial Hardship

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

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 *and*

- the adequate nighttime residence is considered a permanent place of residency, **or**
- there is an indication that 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, **or**
- the Veteran is 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

References:

HUD-VASH, see the [HUD-VASH Resource Guide for Permanent Housing and Clinical Care](#), and SSVF, see [SSVF Grantee Resources](#)

e. Overview of Roles and Responsibilities in the Homeless Program

The Office of Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement maintains oversight of VBA’s Homeless Program. The table below outlines the roles and responsibilities within VBA’s Homeless Program.

The...	Responsibilities Include...
VBA Homeless Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing strategies, objectives, and ensuring development, implementation, and oversight of VBA’s Homeless Program in accordance with 38 U.S.C. Section 2003 • serving as the VBA’s liaison to VA’s Homeless Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans • serving as the VBA’s liaison to other VA Homeless Program offices or work groups

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

e. Overview of Roles and Responsibilities in the Homeless Program (Continued)

The...	Responsibilities Include...
VBA Homeless Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing strategies, objectives, and ensuring development, implementation, and oversight of VBA's Homeless Program in accordance with 38 U.S.C. Section 2003 • serving as the VBA's liaison to VA's Homeless Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans • serving as the VBA's liaison to other VA Homeless Program offices or work groups • ensuring synchronization of VBA's Homeless Program's benefits and outreach across all business lines • ensuring development and implementation of annual training requirements for HVOCs, JIVCs and HVCCs • ensuring development and implementation of any VBA Homeless Program training calls • maintaining accountability mechanisms for reporting VBA's Homeless Program operations, including the number of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ currently homeless Veterans ○ Veterans at imminent risk and risk of homelessness, to include justice involved, and ○ formerly homeless ○ claims flashed as homeless, at risk, and formerly homeless ○ timeliness of claims flashed as homeless, at risk and formerly homeless at each stage of the claims process ○ outreach hours targeted for homeless Veterans ○ outreach hours targeted for justice involved Veterans, and ○ personal interviews with homeless Veterans

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

e. Overview of Roles and Responsibilities in the Homeless Program (Continued)

The...	Responsibilities Include...
Regional Office Directors (or designee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing, implementing, and maintaining a location-specific <i>Regional Office Homeless Veteran Program Plan</i> that identifies local resources, guidelines for referring Veterans to other agencies, outreach needs, station specific metrics, and claims prioritization and workload management procedures • ensuring case management coordination and proper prioritization for claims identified as involving a homeless Veteran and Veterans at risk of homelessness • ensuring expedited processing at all stages of the claims process and tracking the workload appropriately for all claims identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness. • designating and maintaining accurate reporting of employees assigned to the following roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HVOC ○ JIVC, and ○ HVCC <p>References: For more information on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the <i>Regional Office Homeless Veterans Program Plan</i>, see the VBA's Homeless Veterans Program page • claims prioritization for Homeless Veterans and Veterans at immediate risk of

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.

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

f. Designation and Role of the HVOC (Continued)

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

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

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](#), (intranet) and legislative requirements see [38 U.S.C. § 2003](#)

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 VHA other federal agencies and national Veterans advocacy groups to including, but not limited to:

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

**g. HVOC
Coordination
Duties With
VHA, Other
Federal
Agencies, and
National
Veterans
Advocacy
Groups
(Continued)**

- 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 Services and Resources (HCRV) Program, and
 - Readjustment Counseling Service (Vet Center) staff
- Department of Labor (DOL) programs, such as
 - Veteran’s Reintegration Program, and
 - Jobs for Homeless Veterans Program
- Social Security Administration and
- Veterans Service Organizations.

**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 to obtain temporary housing
 - provide support to local Community Resource and Referral Centers at least once a quarter
 - develop and establish local procedures for priority exam scheduling and warm handoffs between Veteran Service Center 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, Readjustment Counseling Service, HCRV and VJO as necessary.

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

h. HVOC Coordination and Outreach Duties With State, and Local Homeless Programs (Continued)

- contact and/or visit shelters and homeless service providers within the local jurisdiction on a regular basis
- coordinate with State Departments 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.
- Update known shelter addresses on the national list

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](#)
- the role of the HVCC, see [VBA letter 20-13-19](#), Enclosure A: Homeless and Imminent Risk of Homelessness Veterans' Claims

3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

**i. HVOC
Coordination
and Outreach
Duties at
Regional
Offices Where
the Position is
Not Required
(Continued)**

- coordination and outreach duties of the HVOC, see
- M27-1, Part II, Chapter 1
- M27-1, Part II, Chapter 2
- [VBA letter 20-13-19](#), Enclosure B: Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators

**j. Role as the
JIVC**

In support of [38 U.S.C. § 2022 subsection \(e\)](#), VBA will collaborate with VHA and other partners to provide an outreach program 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 combined.

Reference: For more information regarding justice involved veterans, see [38 U.S.C. §§ 2022](#), and [2023](#).

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

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
- quarterly coordination, at the least, with HCRV and VJO in order to visit federal, state, and local correctional facilities, 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.
- providing outreach services to family members of incarcerated Veterans
- participating in outreach services at least quarterly to Veterans at risk of homelessness involved in the following;
 - Veterans Treatment Courts, or
 - inpatient psychiatric care, or
 - substance abuse treatment, or
 - imprisonment.

Note: The JIVC position is an additional duty (such as, Elderly and Woman Veterans Coordinators).

l. Role of the HVCCs

The role of the HVCC is to provide appropriate workload management of claims for benefits from homeless Veterans and Veterans at imminent risk of homelessness, assuring:

- proper prioritization by ensuring an appropriate flash is placed on rating and non-rating claims
 - frequent follow up on pending actions
 - use of telephone development whenever possible
 - collaboration with VHA and other involved counterparts
 - appropriate action is taken to move each claim to the next cycle to meet
 - timeliness goal set by the Under Secretary of Benefits
 - provide outreach to Incarcerated Veterans
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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

I. Role of the HVCCs (Continued)

- Proper workload management and reporting. (e.g. Tableau) (internal)

Reference: For more information on priority processing of compensation and pension claims, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D

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, and ensuring the correct corporate flash is associated with the Veterans record.

The RO's HVOC, HVCC or designee is responsible for contacting and referring a Veteran who is deemed homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to appropriate VHA programs to assist with housing and healthcare needs within five (5) days of notification that the Veteran is homeless or at risk of being homeless.

- As soon as VBA becomes aware that the record indicates the Veteran is homeless, the homeless flash should be applied.
- As soon as VBA becomes aware that the record indicates the Veteran is at risk of becoming homeless, the hardship flash should be applied.

Upon receipt of a claim where the corporate record was flashed as homeless previously, the HVOC, HVCC or designee will contact the Veteran and determine if the homeless flash, formerly homeless flash or hardship flash is appropriate and flash the record accordingly.

- As soon as VBA becomes aware that the Veteran is no longer homeless, the formerly homeless flash should be applied.

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

l. Use of the Homeless, Hardship, and Formerly Homeless Flashes (Continued)

The table below outlines the proper use of flashes for the Homeless Veterans program:

If the Veteran Meets the...	Then ...
homeless Veteran criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the <i>Homeless</i> corporate record flash, and • the HOMELESS indicator in BIRLS on the MISC screen. • applying a corporate flash and the MSC screen in BIRLS, see the SHARE User Guide.
at risk of homelessness criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the Hardship corporate record flash* • use of the <i>Hardship</i> 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.
formerly homeless criteria	<p>Use the <i>Formerly Homeless</i> corporate record flash.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applying a corporate flash, see the SHARE User Guide.

* Note: Use of the Hardship corporate record flash is not exclusive to the Homeless Veterans Program.

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 Reporting Tool Plus* within five (5) business days of the activity.

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3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

n. Overview of Homeless Program Reporting (Continued)

An outreach activity is defined as any activity in which *VA reaches out* to proactively provide information, services, and benefits counseling to veterans, and to the spouses, children, and parents of veterans to ensure that are fully informed about and receive assistance in applying for, such benefits.

Homeless and Justice outreach reported in the Outreach Reporting Tool Plus (ORT+) includes, but is not limited to:

- briefings
- conferences
- town halls
- stand downs
- participation in Veteran treatment courts
- visits to homeless shelters
- events sponsored by VHA or other government agencies
- events sponsored by Veteran Service Organizations
- point in time counts
- visits to jails or prisons

To ensure regional offices accurately account for homeless outreach activities, new data elements have been added to ORT+. This allows the coordinator to capture more detailed information about a homeless event or referral. The additional data elements are listed below.

- Homeless Shelter Contacted
- Homeless Agencies Contacted
- Homeless Referrals

Effective August 6, 2020, all regional offices are required to report homeless outreach activities in accordance with the new data elements listed above. Previous outreach activities are still to be recorded as identified in this section.

The table below outlines data to be recorded in Outreach Reporting Tool Plus relating to service provided to homeless Veterans.

3. Homeless and Justice Involved Veterans Program, Continued

Information to Report in ORT+	Record as a:
Outreach events targeted towards homeless, at risk or justice-involved Veterans or family members	Outreach event

Reference: ORT+: <https://vaww.vashare.vba.va.gov/sites/20E/ORT/default.aspx>

o. Jurisdiction of Claims for Benefits from Homeless Claimants

The RO closest to the Veteran's physical address is considered the station of jurisdiction (SOJ) for homeless and at imminent risk of homelessness Veterans' rating related 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 to the new SOJ by the National Work Queue (NWQ) when ready for next action. As soon as a claim is noted to be in an SOJ other than the one matching the Veteran's address, the HVCC or designee will email the NWQ for action.

Non-rating claims are not mandated to be processed by the SOJ and may be assigned by the NWQ to any appropriate station.

For business line specific procedures regarding claims for homeless or at-risk Veterans see the procedures listed in the table below

Benefit/Program Area	Procedural Guidance
Compensation	M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D.2
Pension	M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D.2

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 internal list located on the Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement intranet page here: [Homeless Coordinators Directory](#).