

Completing the Promise Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness for America's Veterans

Increase Outreach to Homeless Veterans:

- 1. Outreach** - Dedicated staff at all VA Medical Centers would mean that more than **100,000 veterans would be seen and interviewed by VA clinicians in outreach activities over a three year term.** The additional staff (150 FTEE) would, on average, spend half their time on outreach activities thereby seeing an additional 10,200 additional veterans each year or more than 30,000 veterans over the three year demonstration.
- 2. Stand Downs** - at as many as 100 sites across the country each year there are events that bring homeless veterans together with community based and state and local government service providers, VA health care and benefits staff and a host of others prepared to assist them and their families with housing, health care, employment, legal, education, transportation or other barriers preventing them from reintegrating back into the social mainstream. We estimate that these events with modest financial support could support these one-stop service delivery programs for homeless veterans. There is a targeted White House project to assure that all veterans at the Millennium will have a safe places to go to and will have be able to secure treatment as we enter the new millennium. This initiative could be targeted to that effort. Between 25,000 and 50,000 veterans could attend these Millennium Stand Downs. **Over the three year period between 50,000 and 100,000 veterans could be engaged in first step recovery activities.**
- 3. Excess military and civilian clothing** - VA, with GSA and DoD assistance, provides excess property to veterans who are homeless. Generally this consists of boots, hat, coats, pants, shirts and other excess military personal clothing items. Sometimes sleeping bags, blankets and other items are also available. A current inventory lists over 220 items is being distributed to community events [such as stand downs, community-based veteran homeless service providers, to Vet Centers and other VA targeted homeless programs] This Hammer Award winning program has distributed more than \$35 million of property to homeless veterans during the past four years. A significant new initiative to add donated civilian clothing (much more appropriate for veterans attempting to return to work) and donated furniture and equipment could assist thousands of homeless veterans and community based homeless veterans service providers. **70,000 - 125,000 veterans would be assisted by this initiative over a three year period.**

Increase community based residential care and services:

- 1. 31,000 veterans could be housed over three years in high quality community based settings** By having 150 additional FTEE each VA medical center would, for the first time have dedicated staff with community based contract money available including \$2 million for demonstration sites for new women veterans. These new dollars could ensure that more than 19,000 additional veterans are provided residential care over three years.
- 2. Nearly 20,000 veterans additional could be serviced over three years by community based programs** by increasing per diem by \$7 million for new grantees, providing \$5 million for non grant recipients and using \$2.5 million in new funds in years two and three. Average cost per veterans is estimated to be \$1440
- 3. The psychological break to being homeless among veterans is to be gainfully employed.** VA offers Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) to address this need. This program offers many veterans with significant barriers to employment, particularly homelessness, with job readiness, job hardening, experiences. At present this medical care program results in some veterans being able to move directly into competitive work in the community (approximately 3,500 annually) with nearly 10,000 who need additional skills development and training. An additional \$2.0 million annually would allow ten significant new program activations and ten significant program augmentations of CWT sites and expand programs that could place more formerly homeless veterans in competitive employment. **More than 6,000 veterans could benefit from this initiative over three years.**

Collaboration with others

The missing (Federal) links to help homeless veterans.

- 1. HVRP - the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program** (administered and funded by DOL VETS) provides small grants to community based non-profit organizations who work directly with homeless veterans. Currently this program receives \$2.5 million and has 22 operating sites. If funding is provided in the amount of \$12.5 million, (an increase of \$10.0 million) we believe one or more projects could be awarded in 3/4's (37) of the states. (Up to 100 grantees could be funded - **up to 45,000 veterans could be served with up to 30,000 placed back on to employment rolls** over the three year period.

2. **Veteran representation on HUD's local planning boards.** There is a strong need to have a veterans advocate at the local level since there is no existing mechanism to assist veterans at the national level to ensure that the needs of homeless veterans are addressed locally.
3. VA has, for more than 4 years, conducted meetings with strong participation from the veterans community to looking into the services available locally for homeless veterans (catalogue/list the current resources), identify the unmet needs and develop local action plans to address those unmet needs. This meeting and report (called "CHALENG for Veterans") occurs at each VA medical center across the country and is filled with local resource information and unmet needs of veterans in that area. A targeted way to get that information to HUD's local planning process should be initiated. **IF HUD used the "CHALENG for Veterans" Report it would significantly ensure that the needs of homeless veterans are being looked at in the local continuum of care plans.** As with any reporting system, the weight each community would give to this information may vary, however, it is important for this information to be considered.
4. **HUD-VASH** - Long term housing has been identified as one of the top unmet needs of veterans for several years in our CHALENG report. Each VA employees [generally a social worker] case manages approximately 30 voucher recipients. A number, believed to be up to 500 HUD Section 8 vouchers are expected to expire in the near future. All current vouchers for veterans should be held and more vouchers should be offered for seriously mentally and physically ill veterans who have been homeless. If thirty additional sites were added to the present list and 1,800 future vouchers would be added, there would be a total annual VA staff investment of \$4.0 million, **1,800 veterans would have long-term housing** which will reduce their dependence on VA health care system. [HUD costs associated with this proposal are unknown.)
5. **AmeriCorps** -- Military service and civilian voluntary service are found to be highly compatible under the Corporation of National Service's "Collaboration for Homeless Veterans." LA VETS is a National Direct grantee from the Corporation and operates a highly effective program with approximately 90 full-time members. Approximately 40% of those members are veterans and many of those veterans have formerly been homeless. A near tripling of full-time members to 250 (nationwide) could mean operating programs in at least 20 states and provide outreach and coordinating community resources with VA health care for at least 50,000 veterans who are homeless.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

1. Monitoring and evaluation of VA's homeless programs has been rigorous since its inception more than ten years ago. With all the additional programs and sites suggested and to ensure a quality review with reliable information that is both understandable and comparable to existing program monitoring an additional \$0.5 million annually for the North East Program and Evaluation Center (NEPEC) is needed. NEPEC's high quality standards of review are unmatched under any existing homeless program system in the country and is the best protection to ensuring that the highest quality evaluation is conducted.

FINAL COSTS/SUMMARY:

Impact on Lives

Over 3 years, more than 250,000 veterans will be seen, provided clinical care, including contract residential care and care provided under per diem, job preparation and job referral. Tens of thousands will, as a result of this increase intervention, be healthier and happier thereby reducing out nation's health care costs appreciably.

If 40,000 veterans are returned to work, by year three and make \$1,000 per month, the economy will be enriched with \$480 million in paid wages and even at an overall tax contribution of 15%, a contribution of \$72 million in the total tax revenues could be achieved.

Estimate of Veterans Impacted by Program Area Over a Three Years Period

	Existing and New	New Only
Outreach	100,000	30,000
Stand Downs	105,000	37,000
Clothing Distribution		
Contract Care	31,000	19,000
Per Diem	42,000	30,000
CWT	40,000	9,000
HVRP	45,000	30,000
AmeriCorps	25,000	15,000
TOTAL	388,000	170,000

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	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Outreach and Community Contract Clinical Care	27	27	27
New Grants	12	12	12
Per Diem for Grantees	7	7	7
Per Diem for Non-Grantees	5	5	5
Compensated Work Therapy	2	2	2
Stand Downs	2.5	2.5	2.5
Excess Property Distribution	0.5	0.5	0.5
Program Monitoring	0.5	0.5	0.5
Ongoing efforts		5	10
TOTAL by YEAR	56.5	61.5	66.5
ADD'L Funding - Other Agency Collaborations			
HUD-VASH (VA costs only)	1	2	3
HVRP	10	10	10
TOTAL by YEAR	11	12	13

Homeless
vets

Infrastructure Disposal

Parameters

- Establish a five year pilot, which expires September 30, 2005;
- Limit project to 30 disposals;
- Provide resources and transfer authority from the working reserve to cover administrative start-up costs in the FY 2000 budget; and
- Evaluate the pilot in the fifth year to assess goal achievement and effectiveness.

Distribution of Proceeds

- *90 percent to VA divided among the following:*
 - local VA medical center,
 - Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) to benefit veterans in the regional area, and
 - VA Capital Asset Revolving Fund to pay costs associated with future property sales.
- *10 percent to benefit the homeless-* Currently, homeless groups may obtain surplus Federal property at no cost under the Stewart B. McKinney Act. This pilot would direct property sale proceeds to HUD's Homeless Assistance Grant account for distribution to Continuum of Care grantees in the local area where the sale takes place. These funds would supplement the community's continuum of care for veteran-specific and general homeless population projects. The Interagency Council on the Homeless (including VA, HUD, GSA, and HHS) would issue guidance, reporting criteria, and ensure that veteran populations are served by the funds. *central office*

Disposal Process

- Thirty days prior to disposal, VA would notify OMB and GSA of a property sale and notify Congress if the sale exceeds the threshold for major construction projects (currently \$4 million).
- VA would conduct hearings to address local-area concerns associated with the disposal.
- VA would participate in GSA's government-wide property database management system and would have the option to pay for their expertise to facilitate property disposals.
- Federal agencies would have the first chance to pay fair market value for VA's excess property before it would go to the public for sale.
- If after thirty days, no federal agency elects to purchase the asset, VA would have the authority to sell, transfer, or exchange property to State, local, or private institutions for fair market value.

Goal: Pilot a change to the Property Act that gives government agencies an incentive to eliminate unnecessary infrastructure while supporting the intent of the Stewart B. McKinney Act.

Current Homeless Law:

Under Section 501 of the McKinney Act (42 U.S.C. sec 11411), (recently amended by section 2824 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1993), the Interagency Council on the Homeless works with HUD and HHS in coordinating the conveyance of surplus properties at no cost to homeless assistance groups in local areas. One of the primary purposes of the McKinney Act is to coordinate public assistance to the homeless.

Recommendation:

- 10% of property sale proceeds would go to the Homeless Assistance Grants account in HUD for homeless populations.
- HUD would distribute funds to local Continuum of Care grantee.
- The local homeless assistance grantee would use the funds to supplement their awarded funding for the community's continuum of care plan, for veteran-specific and general homeless population projects.
- The Interagency Council on the Homeless (including VA, HUD, GSA, and HHS) would issue guidance, reporting criteria, and ensure that veteran populations are served by the funds.