



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital
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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Madison VA hospital fights Veteran homelessness

MADISON, Wis. — At one time in their lives, they each raised their right hands and swore an oath to defend their nation. They stood ready to give their lives for their country. Many fought armed enemies of the United States in faraway lands.

Today they are homeless veterans — veterans without homes, but not without hope.

Veterans are significantly overrepresented in America's homeless population. They are 40 percent more likely to be homeless than the general population, and William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital in Madison is in the fight to help end their plight.

The best and most recent national data, based on a single-night "point-in-time" census taken about one year ago, found that 67,495 veterans nationwide were homeless. Considering a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs goal to end homelessness among veterans, it's a troubling number — but it does represent a significant improvement from the previous year, when 76,329 homeless veterans were counted and from 2008 when the veteran homeless population was 131,230.

The 12 percent decline from January 2010 to January 2011 puts VA on track to achieve its five-year goal of eliminating veteran homelessness by 2015.

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Homeless veterans are a moving target that makes the population difficult to track. Homelessness isn't necessarily an everyday condition for these veterans as they move in and out of shelters and are occasionally supported by friends or families. Even getting an accurate count is challenging, because the homeless can only be counted as veterans if they identify themselves that way. Some choose not to be counted as veterans and some avoid being counted at all. The census also misses those who were not homeless the one night a year the count is made, but would have been on the street or in a shelter on another night. And some homeless people simply are missed.

Getting a veteran to a homeless shelter or even into transitional housing does not solve the problem. Madison VA Hospital programs deal with veterans as whole people who, more often than not, face multiple challenges that go well beyond their lack of permanent housing. Homeless veterans tend to have fragile or non-existent family relationships, mental health or addiction issues, problems with their physical health, legal problems, financial difficulties, and chronic unemployment. These issues can amplify each other to overwhelm a veteran.

Because every single homeless veteran once wore a U.S. military uniform, they have inside them specific qualities, experiences and accomplishments that many non-veterans don't have: they have been part of a team and entrusted to defend their country.

"We want to help them regain self-respect they may have lost and get them back on the team with their fellow veterans," says Marybeth Urbin, a Madison VA Hospital social worker who heads the hospital's homeless program.

The Madison VA Hospital's resources to fight veteran homelessness have increased dramatically, including a homeless program staff nearly doubled in size over the past year to 19. The VA's programs offer services focused on prevention, treatment, employment and job training, and housing support.

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These programs and improved resources are taking hold. The number of transitional housing beds available at King, Janesville, two Madison locations and in Rockford, Ill, has doubled since October 2010 to about 120. Permanent supportive housing for veterans has also increased, and there are now 120 vouchers for homeless veterans in Madison and Rockford.

At the center of the Madison VA Hospital's strategy to eliminate homelessness among veterans is a "no wrong door" approach, which means veterans seeking help should find it in any number of the VA's programs or from community partners. The VA will continue to offer a full range of support necessary to end the cycle of homelessness by providing education, jobs, health care and counseling, in addition to housing.

"We treat our veterans who are homeless as the people they were born to be, not what they've become," Urbin says.

William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital is a Madison-based 87-bed acute care facility that provides health care for veterans who live in a 13,600 square mile service area of 15 counties in south central Wisconsin and five counties in northwestern Illinois. A recently opened community living center provides an additional 14 beds for sub-acute transitional care, along with four hospice suites. The hospital operates an annex clinic in Madison and community-based outpatient clinics in Baraboo, Beaver Dam and Janesville, Wis., and in Freeport and Rockford, Ill. The total veteran population in the Madison VA Hospital's service area is more than 120,000.

For more information about the Madison VA Hospital, visit www.madison.va.gov or www.facebook.com/MadisonVAHospital.

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NOTE: Data on the Madison VA Hospital's homeless program follows.

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Data from Madison VA Hospital's homeless program (FY10)

Number of persons served:	166
Gender:	Female 4%
	Male 96%
Race:	African-American 14%
	Asian 2%
	Hispanic/Latino 2%
	White 82%
Mean Age:	52.9

Characteristics of homeless Veterans served by Madison VA Hospital homeless program

Homeless	100%
Unemployed	100%
Mental Disorders	87%
Alcohol/ Substance Addiction	69%
Medical Issues	61%
Dual Diagnosis	49%

Grant & Per Diem (GPD) Program

VA partnership with community agencies to provide transitional housing for up to two years

King (Waupaca County) — Veterans Assistance Program	26 beds
Madison — Porchlight's Spring Street Program	24 beds
Madison — Veterans Assistance Foundation – Step Up Program	5 - 7 beds
Janesville — Rock Valley Community Program	48 beds (new)
Rockford (IL) — Rosecrance Ware Center	16 beds (12 new)

Housing & Urban Development and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program

VA partnership with public housing authorities (HUD) community agencies to provide permanent supportive housing

Madison	60 housing vouchers
Rockford (IL)	35 housing vouchers
Rockford (IL)	25 new housing vouchers

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Services

The Department of Veterans Affairs has developed a comprehensive program of support and services to fight homelessness among the nation's veterans.

Prevention — Includes the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, Veterans Justice Programs, and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program.

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans

A National Call Center for Homeless Veterans to ensure that homeless Veterans or Veterans at-risk for homelessness have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. The hotline is intended to assist homeless

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Veterans and their families, VA Medical Centers, federal, state and local partners, community agencies, service providers and others in the community. To be connected with trained VA staff member call 1-877-4AID VET (877-424-3838).

Health Care for Re-entry

The Health Care for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Program addresses the community re-entry needs of incarcerated Veterans. HCRV's goals are to prevent homelessness, reduce the impact of medical, psychiatric, and substance abuse problems upon community re-adjustment, and decrease the likelihood of re-incarceration for those leaving prison.

Veteran Justice Outreach

The purpose of the Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) initiative is to avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among Veterans by ensuring that eligible justice-involved Veterans have timely access to VHA mental health and substance abuse services when clinically indicated, and other VA services and benefits as appropriate.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program provides supportive services to very low-income Veterans and their families who are in or transitioning to permanent housing. VA awards grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives who assist very low-income Veterans and their families by providing a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability.

Treatment — Includes healthcare for homeless Veterans, healthcare and other services for Veterans exiting prison, information on Veteran Stand Downs, Drop-In Centers, and VA's Homeless Veteran Dental Assistance Program.

Healthcare for Homeless Veterans

The core mission of HCHV is outreach provided by VA social workers and other mental health clinicians to identify homeless veterans who are eligible for VA services and assist them in accessing appropriate healthcare and benefits. HCHV also functions as a mechanism to contract with providers for community-based residential treatment for homeless veterans.

Veteran Stand Downs

Stand Downs are one part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' efforts to provide services to homeless veterans. Stand Downs are typically one- to three-day events providing services to homeless Veterans such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, VA and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other necessary services, such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment.

Homeless Veterans Dental Program

The Homeless Veteran Dental Program increases accessibility to quality dental care to homeless Veteran patients in the Grant and Per Diem program and helps assure success in VA-sponsored and VA partnership homeless rehabilitation programs.

Employment and Job Training — Includes VA's Compensated Work Therapy program where homeless Veterans earn pay while learning new job skills, relearning successful work habits, and regaining a sense of self-esteem and self-worth.

Compensated Work Therapy

In VA's Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence (CWT/TR) Program, disadvantaged, at-risk, and homeless Veterans live in CWT/TR community-based supervised group homes while working for pay in VA's Compensated Work Therapy Program. Veterans in the CWT/TR program work about 33 hours per week, with approximate earnings of \$732 per month, and pay an average of \$186 per month toward maintenance and up-keep of the residence. The average length of stay is about 174 days. VA contracts with private industry and the public sector for work done by these Veterans, who learn new job skills, relearn successful work habits, and regain a sense of self-esteem and self-worth.

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Housing Support — Includes information and resources to provide permanent, transitional, or temporary housing and ongoing case management and treatment services for Homeless Veterans.

HUD-VASH

The Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) Program provides permanent housing and ongoing case management treatment services for homeless Veterans who require these supports to live independently. The vouchers are portable, allowing Veterans to live in communities where VA case management services can be provided. This program provides for our most vulnerable Veterans, and is especially helpful to Veterans with families, women Veterans, recently returning Veterans and Veterans with disabilities.

Grant and Per Diem Program

The Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program is offered annually by the VA, as funding permits, to fund community-based agencies providing transitional housing or service centers for homeless Veterans.

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