

VISN 1 VA CT Healthcare System

“Working Five-Year Plans”

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PURPOSE

When Secretary Shinseki presented The Five Year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness in 2009, it was a bold stroke advocating support for America's most vulnerable citizens, our homeless Veterans. The Nation is involved in two distant conflicts, its' economy has faltered, and Veteran households are struggling with unemployment and the risk of losing their homes, as well as coping with medical and mental health issues. For some, the struggle is too great. They have lost their income, their housing, and stable way of life. For other Veterans, with substance abuse disorders and mental illnesses, the “street” has become their home. Secretary Shinseki's Five Year Plan to End Homelessness charts an aggressive path to end Veteran Homelessness and to disrupt this pattern of housing loss. The VA's plan calls for more comprehensive approaches to treatment, faster access to VA benefits, and new employment initiatives. Congress has allocated more funding for medical and mental health care, transitional and permanent housing programs, and training and employment programs. Long term and effective collaborations with a broad array of state and local service providers will make Veteran homelessness a condition of the past.

MEASURABLE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

At a minimum, the “Working Five Year Plans” should include measurable goals, objectives and outcomes that address and demonstrate the following:

Mitigation of VA access barriers for at-risk and homeless veterans

- 1.) Aggressive, on-going outreach by the VA CT Homeless Team at locations throughout the State is the primary mitigation tool. VA CT Outreach Workers visit soup kitchens and shelters on a regular basis in the urban centers as well as in many rural locations. Drop-in clinics are held each morning at the VA West Haven and Newington campuses and at soup kitchens in Hartford, Meriden, Norwalk, Norwich, and New London.
- 2.) A Homeless Veteran clinic phone line (203-710-6529) is managed by Homeless staff every day. Veterans can receive immediate assistance and referral by calling the line. The National Call Center (NCC) Hotline refers Connecticut Veterans who are at risk of homelessness or homeless at the time of call. These NCC calls are handled by staff during the business day and by the VA CT Psychiatric Emergency Room during the evening and weekend hours.
- 3.) The expansion of VA transitional housing around Connecticut is helping to eliminate barriers. Transitional housing is often the first stop for homeless Veterans in more distant locales looking for services. Housing providers in Bridgeport, Hartford, and New London offer drop-in clinic hours for Veterans. VA CT Homeless Outreach Workers attend these clinics and make efforts to engage the homeless. As the VASH program expands in more distant areas, VASH case managers also serve as the VA Homeless representatives in those locations, conducting outreach to chronically homeless Veterans who can benefit from supportive housing.
- 4.) The VA Connecticut Psychiatric Emergency Room (Ps-ER) serves as a point of entry for many homeless Veterans suffering from acute mental illness or/and substance abuse withdrawal. The Ps-ER and the VA Homeless program oversee five emergency beds at Columbus House Shelter that are available for the acute homeless. VA CT is looking to expand emergency beds through an HCHV contract to Greater Hartford using the South Park Inn.
- 5.) More and more Veteran families are presenting as homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Veteran families have few options for housing supports until the new VSSF rolls out. The VA CT relies on community agencies to help Veterans and their dependant family members. VA CT is working with family providers in Bridgeport, Shelton, New Haven, Hartford, Waterbury, and Mystic to help meet the complex needs of Veteran households.
- 6.) When a Veteran family is in crisis and there are no other alternatives, the VA CT can rely on an emergency housing fund operated by the Greater New Haven Loan Fund to pay for several nights in a motel unit.
- 7.) Staff continues to use HUD funded Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing resources where the funding is still available to help Veterans who are at risk of losing their housing or need rapid rehousing. The HUD HEARTH

ACT program will roll out in 2011 and take the place of HPRR. Homeless Team members have been trained in the Hearth Act intends to use this program to assist Veterans at risk of homelessness.

8.) VA Connecticut has hired two Veteran Justice Initiative Social Workers, one for West Haven and one for Newington. These new staff are working with Veterans needing jail diversion, as well as those re-entry Veterans coming from incarceration. A third staff has been assigned to assist with women Veterans' leaving incarceration.

9.) VA CT continues to provide access to the thirty-two bed psycho-social rehabilitation unit called "Next Steps." Homeless Veterans can address acute psychiatric and substance abuse issues as well as seek housing, income and benefits, and vocational programs while staying on this unit.

Reduction of the number of homeless veterans in respective geographical areas consistent with the target in VA's FY2011 plan to end homelessness among veterans

VA CT plans to reduce the number of homeless Veterans in CT by 20% this year by providing permanent housing support and clinical services to over 160 Veterans. VA CT will involve a full array of housing resources including transitional housing, HUD-VASH vouchers, permanent supportive housing, and private housing placements in the community. HUD-VASH vouchers and permanent supportive housing resources are being distributed in every corner of CT, providing housing solutions not simply near the VA Medical Centers but in rural communities as well.

1. 140 new VASH vouchers are being distributed in 2011 to Waterbury, West Haven, Fairfield County, Southeast CT, Danbury, Torrington, and Hartford. Project based vouchers have been awarded to Old Saybrook and are anticipated in Jewett City.

2. New permanent supportive housing units were developed privately and opened their doors in 2011 in Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Hamden. Veteran apartments are being made available in these units. New supportive housing projects are underway in Newington, New London, Meriden, Jewett City, and Windham with several opening in 2011.

3. VA CT Permanent Housing Specialists work with homeless or at risk Veterans to assist them access to Housing Authority waiting lists and other affordable housing options in the community. The goal in 2011 is to find housing for more than 30 Veterans through these community resources.

Increase in homeless Veteran outreach contacts by 10 percent and National Call Center for Homeless Veteran referrals by 20 percent by September 30, 2011

Although the goal is to increase outreach contacts by over 10% to a total of 700 new Veterans in 2011, this is a challenging goal since so many homeless intakes were completed in 2010, an increase of 40% from the previous year. Half way through the year, we are at _____new intakes.

1. Aggressive outreach to new shelters, soup kitchens, hospitals, police departments.
2. Renewed efforts with our existing community partners especially in New Haven and Bridgeport.
3. Expand in-reach at the VA including Primary Care clinics, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, specialty clinics, Vet Centers, and CBOCs.
4. Closer collaboration with the CT National Guard and Reserve to engage returning OIF/OEF soldiers and their families. Engage in services 25 or more newly returning soldiers households.

Implementation and expansion of crisis response assistance services for at-risk and homeless Veterans at all VHA primary care and mental health entry points

Crisis response services are readily available through VA CT's Suicide Prevention program, the 24/7 Psychiatric Emergency Room and Medical Emergency Rooms, the strong OIF/OEF program, and the widely recognized Women's Veteran program. In addition, Homeless Staff are present at and engage Homeless Veterans at six CBOCs that offer ready access to VA care in remote areas. VA CT works closely with numerous community partners: Vet Centers, police depts., court systems, and shelters; often holding weekly clinics to ensure wide response capability for homeless Veterans who are in crisis. The National Call Center Hotline has been an effective tool for homeless Veterans and those at-risk to get immediate access to VA services. VA CT Homeless's staff continues to outreach and educate with community homeless providers and non-VA medical centers on a weekly basis.

Implementation and expansion of discharge planning and referral services for at-risk and homeless Veterans on all VAMC residential and inpatient units

Fully integrated, multi-disciplinary discharge planning occurs on a daily basis at VA CT on all of its inpatient mental health, medical, and psychosocial residential units. This discharge planning starts from day one when an assessment of housing needs and options is completed and housing and income needs are identified. Social Workers and other clinical providers on these inpatient units refer and consult regularly with homeless program staff about housing, community based residential treatment, and financial resources available to support living independently in the community. The Errera Center, where the Homeless program is located, consists of almost 100 staff in various psychosocial programs that are aware of and understand the resources of the VA and community homeless programs. These clinical teams and staff often collaborate with the VA Homeless staff in clinical rounds and briefings about the status of Veterans who are living in transitional and permanent housing, the availability of housing units, and the nature of diverse residential programs.

Implementation and expansion of 24/7 crisis response and housing assistance for all referred homeless Veterans

The Homeless Team operates a daily basic needs clinic at West Haven campus where veterans can walk in and obtain basic needs and register for VA services. Emergency contract beds are available daily at Columbus House.

Other outreach activities are carried out in collaboration with homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and community providers on a weekly and monthly basis in Hartford, Norwich, Waterbury, Stamford, Meriden, Willimantic, New London, and Middletown. VA outreach workers participate in numerous Project Homeless Connects, Stand-down events, and other Veteran events and meetings. Homeless program staff attends monthly Continuum of Care (COC) committees and Ten Year Plan committee meetings where they inform local providers working with homeless Veterans about VA services. The VA Staff also speak at other community gatherings and events like Veteran organizations, social clubs, and faith based groups. In the Newington area, daily and weekly clinics are held at the VA primary care facility and at a community shelter provider in Hartford. These clinics include representatives from VBA, Department of Labor, and State of CT Veteran Benefits Counselors. Other Homeless Team members provide support to the Outreach staff. For instance, Grant & Per Diem staff educates and engage local providers about VA services and resources when they are present at community shelters and soup kitchens.

Timely, effective referral assistance systems are in place between VHA facilities, Vet Centers, VA Regional Offices and local NCA offices for at-risk and homeless Veterans by February 15, 2011

Veterans' Basic Needs clinics are held every day at the Errera Community Center (West Haven) and in the Homeless Team offices (Newington). Homeless Veterans are referred by Primary Care or Mental Health and Substance Abuse clinics in the medical units, or by the Psych ER. VA CT Homeless Staff meet regularly with all the Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCS) since the CBOCS make referrals for homeless Veterans living far from the VAMC. Homeless Team Outreach Workers occasionally attend CBOCs administrative meetings to discuss homeless Veterans seeking housing support and mental health treatment. The VET Centers around the State have been contacted and visited by Homeless Team staff. VET Centers refer Veterans facing housing problems and/or homelessness. The Global War on Terrorism Specialist at the West Haven VET Center is very active referring OIF/OEF returning soldiers to the Homeless Program. The OIE/OEF and the Suicide Prevention Coordinators refer homeless Veterans and work collaboratively with the Homeless Program. A VA CT Homeless staff member does monthly outreach with the VBA staff at local shelters providers as well as at the VA CT ECCC.

VA LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT

The VA CT Homeless Program is fortunate to have the involvement and support of both the Director of VA CT and the front office staff, including Associate Director, Chief of Staff, Chief of Patient Care, and Chief of Human Resources. The Chief of the Mental Health Care Line, under which the Homeless Programs are located organizationally, and all the Mental Health clinical services are involved and supportive of this Five Year Plan to End Homelessness. Senior management was briefed in January 2011 to the revisions of the plan and goals for 2011. The Primary Care service has worked closely with the Homeless Program for many years and will be key to the future provision of services to homeless Veterans. The VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics and Vets Centers are also committed to successfully addressing the multi-level needs of homeless Veterans and the array of services available to support their efforts to end their homelessness. VA leadership has invited community partners to a Homeless Summit in February 2011 to hear about and provide input into this plan. Leadership has been present at homeless Veteran events such as the opening of new housing units, ground breakings for new developments, public hearings, Veteran Stand-downs, and the VA CT Homeless Summit.

FEDERAL, STATE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS INVOLVEMENT

Government officials have taken Veterans' homelessness very seriously in CT. All five CT Congressmen (Courtney, Himes, Larson, DeLauro, and Murphy) have advocated and supported Veterans housing in their districts. Newly elected Senator, Richard Blumenthal, has visited the Errera Community Center and articulated his support for ending homelessness. State agencies such as the Dept of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the State Dept of Social Services, the State Dept of Labor, and the CT Housing Finance Authority have been strong partners with VA CT on housing committees dealing with homelessness. Mayors in Danbury, Norwalk, Newington, Griswold, and New Britain have lent their support towards Veteran housing as well as have dozens of town officials. Public housing authorities have been key partners. In Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury, Danbury, West Haven, and Meriden, agency heads have facilitated new housing and VASH placement in their communities.

Statewide homeless and housing advocates such as the CT Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH), the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), and the Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC) have helped VA CT champion the Veteran cause. The Partnership for Strong Communities will hold a Spring workshop with VA and special guests discussing some aspect of Veteran Homelessness in Spring 2011. CCEH leads the Annual Point IN Time Count with VA staff participation in multiple locations throughout the state. CCEH also conducts trainings throughout the year. CSH continues to be a special advocate, locally, at the state, and national levels, advocating for Homeless Veteran participation in government subsidized housing programs. CSH has worked especially hard on Housing First models and project basing HUD-VASH vouchers.

Community homeless and mental health providers as well as affordable housing agencies continue to be key partners. Chrysalis Center is planning 9 new units in Rockville for Veterans and will open a new family program in Hartford. Columbus House shelter is running a transitional housing program for 14 male Veterans and hopes to do more intensive case management with Veteran families. South Park Inn in Hartford runs a very successful weekly drop in clinic for homeless Vets and has service officers from VA, VBA, Vet Centers, and DOL available to help. Supportive Housing Works from Fairfield County has engaged all its members to support the homeless Veteran cause. It created six units of supportive housing for Veterans in Norwalk utilizing the HUD-VASH vouchers. Our case managers work side by side the local case managers at the site to serve the chronically homeless.

Other community groups and individuals provide basic need items, such as welcome baskets for new apartments, clothing, and warm weather items. Still others, like the Hibernian Lodge in Waterbury and students at a Quinnipiac University, conduct furniture drives and deliver items to Veterans moving into new apartments. Other Veteran volunteers and faith based groups help move furniture into Veteran apartments.

**SIX PILLARS IDENTIFIED IN VA'S PLAN TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS
(CURRENT SERVICES, GAPS, BARRIERS, OPPORTUNITIES, FISCAL YEAR (FY)
2011 ACTIONS AND METRICS FOR EACH PILLAR)**

Outreach /Education

The VA CT Homeless Team operates a daily basic needs clinic at the Errera Center in West Haven from 8-10AM and also at the VA Newington Homeless Team offices. Veterans can walk in and get clothes, hygiene products, and cold weather items with referral. Other regular outreach and engagement activities are carried out at homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and community providers in Norwich, New London, Meriden, Middletown, Hartford, Bridgeport, Norwalk, Danbury, and Stamford. VA Outreach Workers participate in annual Project Homeless Connects, Stand-down gatherings, and other special events held around CT. The staff attends over ten Continuums of Care (COC) and Ten Year Plan committee meetings serving large regions of the state. Other community education and engagement activities are carried out at a variety of workshops and events, especially in under-served areas. Other Homeless Team staff provides additional support to the outreach effort. For instance, Grant & Per Diem staff conducts outreach services to homeless Veterans when they are present at local G&PD providers. VASH staff work with local shelter providers in the areas where VASH vouchers have been allocated so they can reach chronically homeless Veterans and Veteran families. The VA CT Homeless Team has a clinic phone that is available for Veterans to call into. This clinic line is held from 8-4:30 every day by Outreach staff. The VA Team also gets many referrals from the National Call Center and responds to them in a timely manner. VA CT Leadership has spoken on radio shows (*Where We Live*, a statewide radio show is the most notable) and will continue to find opportunities to educate and advocate for homeless Veterans.

Operational Plan for Enhancement and Expansion of Outreach/Education:

1. Increase engagement of homeless veterans by 10% above 2010 numbers.
2. Create new partnerships with homeless shelters, soup kitchens, hospitals, and local mental health agencies in the Naugatuck Valley, Milford, Torrington-Winsted, Windham-Danielson, and Bridgeport
3. Actively participate in community sponsored homeless outreach and education events.
 - Project Homeless Connects: Bridgeport, Danbury, Hartford, Waterbury, New Haven, New London, Middletown, Greater Hartford, and Torrington.
 - Annual Stand-Down: State Of CT Veterans' Home at Rocky Hill and Ansonia with No Vets Left Behind.
 - Outreach and education to Veteran Service Organizations and statewide homeless coalitions, including State Veterans Council, Reaching Home Steering Committee, CT Housing Partnership, CT Coalition to End Homelessness, Corporation for Supportive Housing, USICH Opening Doors planning committee, and other regional and local committees.
 - Educate at local Rotary and Chamber of Commerce events.
4. Outreach and education services at homeless service provider agencies and VSOs, community hospitals, faith based organizations, police, correctional agencies, re-entry events, and food pantries.
 - Hill Health Center, Columbus House, Emmanuel Baptist Shelter, South Park Inn, Chrysalis Center, Alpha Community Services, Operation Hope, Stamford and Norwalk shelters, Homeless Hospitality Center, Norwich Soup Kitchen, , Beulah Heights Social Integration Program, No Vets Left Behind,

- Danbury Shelter, New London Homeless Hospitality Center, St Vincent De Paul Shelter.
 - Education and participation in local Continuum of Care and Ten Year Plan Committees including the following: Hartford, Bristol, Danbury, Manchester, Middlesex County, New Haven, Southeast Connecticut, Windham, Waterbury, Bridgeport, Stamford and Norwalk.
 - Participation at re-entry events for Veterans coming out of prison at Whalley and Bridgeport Correctional Institute and other jails and prisons.
5. Partner with Public Housing Authorities in West Haven, New Haven, Danbury, Stratford, Bridgeport, Milford, Waterbury, Ansonia, New London, Norwich, Mansfield, Windham, Meriden, Hartford, Middletown on VASH and other permanent housing for Veterans.
 6. Regular in-reach within the VA Medical Centers in West Haven and Newington, at CBOCs, and VET Centers
 - Operate basic needs clinic and drop-in services at West Haven and Newington campuses.
 - In-service presentations to Mental Health Care and Primary Care staff including nurses, clergy, social workers, and police officers.
 - Present at the VA CT Mental Health Community Advisory Board composed of Veterans from the community as well as consumers
 - Educate and collaborate with MHICM Range program to identify Veterans at risk in rural areas and help provide services to these Veterans.
 - Presentations to CBOCs monthly meeting and schedule regular visits to CBOCs.
 - In-reach to Vet Centers in West Haven, Danbury, Norwich, Stamford, and Waterbury.
 7. Increase referrals to VA CT Homeless Veteran clinic phone line from the community.
 8. Increase consults from the VA National Homeless Call Center with follow-up to Veterans with support, information, and referrals. Provide 24/7 support from the Psych Emergency Room and POD for these referrals.
 9. Expand collaborate with the regional representatives of the CT Dept of Labor, Veteran Reintegration Program who work with numerous homeless Veterans. Assist them with referrals and housing placements for Veterans.
 11. Expand collaborate with the VA CT Vet Center, "GWOT" specialist (Global War on Terror) who engages homeless Veterans from the most recent conflicts.
 12. Make presentations at local colleges and state universities to identify Veterans eligible for VA Homeless services.
 13. Expand collaborations with the six Community Based Outpatient Clinics to engage homeless Veterans who present in these distant locations.
 14. Continue to attend regular COC and Ten Year Plan meetings, educate participants about VA efforts to end homelessness. Sync VA goals with their "Opening Door" plans to end homelessness in ten years.
 15. Hold a Veteran Summit in Feb 2011 as well as hold other regional events in course of the year.

Treatment Services

The VA Connecticut Medical Center in West Haven is a tertiary care facility that provides the following services to Veterans: urgent care, primary care, ambulatory surgery, specialty clinics, mental health, substance abuse, and vocational and housing services. Primary care and mental health services are also offered at the Newington campus, at the Errera Community Care Center (in West Haven), and at six Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). VA CT's Psychiatric Emergency Room is an important gateway to mental health services, providing short-term evaluation and diagnosis of symptoms and treatment needs. Special attention is given to Veterans who may be at high risk for suicide at which time the Suicide Prevention Coordinators become involved to insure appropriate follow up is accomplished.

The Mental Health Service offers individual and group therapy on an outpatient basis at both the West Haven and Newington campuses as well as at the six community-based outpatient clinics. Day programs provide outpatient substance abuse treatment (individual, group, methadone maintenance, intensive day programming) at Newington and West Haven and assist Veterans with locating resources and referring Veterans to other VA programs as well as to community facilities and services. The VA CT is fortunate to be home of the Errera Community Center, a psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery center where Veterans can access a rich array of recovery resources including day programs, vocational and wellness programs, VET to VET groups as well as housing services. The OIF/OEF Program provides case management services to newly returning Veterans, assisting them with the transition from combat zone to civilian life, connecting them to the VA and non-VA resources. A Women's Clinic offers primary care and mental health services to women Veterans.

Operational Plan for Enhancement/Expansion of Treatment:

1. VA CT's plan is to co-locate Primary Care to the Errera Center in 2011 to provide a truly holistic center, allowing for "one stop care" in a culture that is truly Veteran centered. This change will allow for better communication and integration between mental health care and primary care, and be a catalyst for culture change in care coordination.
2. Group based models of case management and treatment are being implemented by VASH teams in Waterbury, Bridgeport, Hartford, and West Haven.
3. The expansion or move of the Errera Center to larger quarters will allow the housing of a new primary care clinic; more space for Veteran groups and VBA and other partner agencies.
4. Outreach to new homeless Veterans is up 40% over last year. As the Homeless Team handles this growth, more work stations and meeting rooms are crucial to the successful integration of treatment programs with other activities and events.

Prevention Services

The VA CT Homeless Team is seeing many more individuals and families at risk for homelessness. The Team provides a variety of VA and non-VA resources to assist with prevention of housing loss. The greatest help has been from the Federally funded, Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP), which provides direct financial support to prevent homeless or rapidly house households that are newly homeless. Since HPRP's start in Spring 2010, homeless Veterans have received assistance for rental payments, past due utilities, and security deposits for new apartments, with added support from the VA Homeless Team. Additional financial resources are made available through local Veteran support organizations, including the Solider, Sailor, & Marine Fund, Veteran Housing Assistance Fund, and from private charities. The Connecticut Veterans' Legal Center holds regular hours at the ECCC; this Center has assisted many Veterans facing eviction and has won stays in numerous cases. The lawyers also help with benefit and unemployment claims, necessary for Veterans to maintain their income, as well as some criminal cases. Many Veterans at risk of homelessness are now accessing the VA through the National Homeless Call Center. In the last year more than 45 calls have been taken by Call Center Point of Contacts in Connecticut. Individuals and families have been directed to the VA for housing support assistance or direct engagement into the VA Healthcare System. In addition, because the Homeless Team is housed at the Errera Community Center, many Veterans in programs at the ECCC who may be at risk of homelessness have been identified early and interventions put in place to prevent loss of housing. The new Veteran Families Program (SSVF) will help community agencies to provide housing assistance to Veteran households, in tandem with VASH support and other types of financial assistance.

Operational Plan for Enhancement/ Expansion of Homeless prevention

1. To engage the returning OIF/OEF soldiers and their families who have been identified at risk of homelessness or actually homeless, VA CT has initiated a major new effort involving the OEF/OIF coordinators, the Homeless Team, primary care and mental health clinicians to expand engagement and support. Medical and mental health clinics have been expanded, evening hours offered, and events outreach events are being held at colleges and universities, as well as new efforts are being undertaken at CBOCS and Vet Centers to engage returning warriors.
2. The Homeless Team will carry out more effective screenings and evaluations of Homeless Veterans to better identify those eligible for the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing funding. In 2011, the Homeless staff will be trained and oriented to the new HEARTH Act program. Veterans at risk or newly homeless will be referred for HEARTH Act funding.
3. Expand legal support to Veterans through the CT Veterans Legal Center housed at the Errera Center. Assist Veterans in the courts to prevent evictions and foreclosures.
4. Utilize the new VJO positions at West Haven and Newington to intervene with jail diversion for Veterans facing charges or those re-entering the community after a term of incarceration.
5. Enter into contracts with emergency shelter providers in Hartford and Milford to add new short-term, respite beds for those facing homelessness or newly homeless.
6. Enhance the partnership with CTI programs to support additional homeless Veterans suffering from SMI. Continue the expansion of HUD-VASH program case management which will have a key role as more and more Veterans find permanent housing.
7. Build stronger alliances with the State of CT Veterans Home at Rocky Hill to access additional housing and Substance Abuse resources.
8. Continue to build partnerships with regional Continuum of Care groups to heighten awareness of the Federal Opening Doors plan and show how the VA is synchronizing its efforts with local COCs and their Opening Door planning.
9. Assist in the roll out the new SSVF program to support Veteran families at risk for homelessness in New Haven, Fairfield and Hartford counties.
10. Expand emergency support for frail elderly or medically compromised Veterans or Veteran households through the Veterans Housing Assistance Fund when appropriate.

Housing/Supportive Services

Grant & Per Diem: With the addition of four new G&PD programs in New London, New Haven, Danbury, and East Hartford in 2010, VA CT offers 158 transitional beds through local providers. Four additional programs will open in 2011 including Connecticut's first transitional housing for women in Bridgeport with 15 beds. Additional transitional housing for special populations will be encouraged through G&PD and HCHV contract funding, including housing for frail elderly, families, and Veterans in early recovery.

VASH Housing: 2008 and 2009 HUD-VASH vouchers have been utilized to house 160 homeless Veterans in permanent housing in five regions of the state, exceeding a 90% utilization rate. An additional 140 vouchers were issued in 2010 and are targeted to the chronically homeless as well as to women Veterans, OIF/OEF Veterans, and families and will be utilized by the end of FY 2011. These vouchers will support the referral list of 100 or more homeless Veterans from around the state. Furniture and accessories necessary to outfit apartments has been donated by dozens of community groups and individuals. Volunteers and staff help move the furniture into apartments so the Veteran can have a home, not just a roof over their head. VA CT is now fully staffed and VASH case managers are being out-placed to regions of the State that has received VASH allocations. These social workers are and will be running groups for Veterans at local service agencies. The VA workers also perform

outreach to homeless providers and educate these communities agencies about VASH and other VA services.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): VA CT has created permanent supportive housing in partnership with local developers and non-profit housing providers. Using state and federal tax credits and other financial resources, three new developments opened in 2010 in Bridgeport, Hamden, and Norwalk with a total of 45 units for Veterans. Each of these developments has on-site support services as well as a VA permanent supportive housing case worker. Numerous other PSH developments are moving closer to construction including the TALVI project in Jewett City with seventeen units and the Victory Gardens development at the VA campus in Newington which will have 74 units for homeless Veterans as well as low income Veteran families.

Operational Plan for Housing/ Supportive Services expansion:

1. Grant & Per Diem and Special Contract Housing Expansion:

Through a careful process of strategic planning, the VA Homeless Program has identified the following growth areas for the G&PD program over the next five years:

- A. Expansion to under-served areas of Connecticut: especially to northeastern (Windham), northwestern (Torrington) as well as the Naugatuck Valley. In 2010, new applications were awarded for G&PD projects in Winsted, Bridgeport, Ansonia, and New Britain. When open, 20 transitional additional beds will be created in 2011 and 28 new beds in 2013. VA CT anticipates the need for a total of 265 G&PD beds by 2014 with the hiring of a new G&PD liaison staff in 2013.
- B. Expansion of HCHV Contract Beds for Emergency and Special Populations:
VA CT will implement new contract funding agreements with providers in Hartford and Milford to create 10 more HCHV contract beds for Veterans in emergency crisis or those in special populations: females, families, frail elderly, persons with SMI, and those persons in early stages of recovery. The construction of a women Veteran transitional housing project in Bridgeport will be completed in 2011 and provide 15 units for women and young children.

2. HUD-VASH Housing with Case Management Services Expansion:

- A. Growth of the HUD-VASH program is crucial to meeting the goal of ending homelessness by 2014. In 2010, VA CT received 140 VASH vouchers to be issued in FY 2011. Over 50 Veterans are in the process of accessing these vouchers and with over 100 more on the VASH interest/referral list. These new vouchers will be distributed to areas that have high homeless counts: West Haven, Hartford, Danbury, Bridgeport, New London-Norwich, Stamford-Norwalk, and Waterbury. A portion of these vouchers will be used in project based housing in Jewett City, Old Saybrook, and Meriden.
- B. Ten new VASH Case managers and support staff have been hired in 2011 to support the 2010 vouchers. An advanced practice nurse, peer supports, and licensed clinical staff have all been hired. Some of these new positions will be out-placed to Waterbury, New London, Bridgeport, and Danbury and remaining underserved areas to provide more immediate access to care for Veterans in VASH supportive housing.
- C. Plans are underway to hire an attending psychiatrist, substance abuse clinician, and additional staff disciplines to support the VASH residents as it expands to over 500 Veterans in case management.
- D. Close coordination of services is crucial and will continue to take place between the VASH Team, HCHV Outreach staff, Grant & Per Diem Liaisons, VA medical and mental health teams, and local CBOCs, as well as the Veteran's employment representatives.
- E. Community partners will continue to play an important role in the identification of homeless Veterans and the referral to Outreach and Engagement and ultimately the VASH housing programs.

3. Permanent Supportive Housing expansion:

- A. Numerous permanent supportive housing developments will move closer to construction in 2011 including the TALVI project in Jewett City with seventeen units for Veterans and the Victory Gardens development on the VA campus at Newington where 74 units will be built for homeless Veterans as well as Veteran families.
- B. Other projects on the drawing boards will have Veteran units including Meriden Housing Authority in Meriden, Cedar Woods in Windham, Harbor Crossing in Old Saybrook, and VET House II in Danbury. During 2011, partnerships for permanent housing will be expanded in Greater Hartford, Bridgeport, Stamford, New London and New Haven with goal of reaching 150 new PSH units by 2014.

Income/Employment/Benefits

Cuts in the CT. Dept of Social Services and other agencies are affecting Veteran families, as well as loss of unemployment benefits. Providing access to income and financial support are key for Veteran households given that state agencies are cutting back. The VA CT Homeless Program has partnered with the Veteran Benefits Administration to conduct benefit workshops at the Errera Community Care Center (ECCC), in Hartford, and in the community. VBA staff attend the ECCC on a monthly basis to discuss eligibility and enter claims with Veterans. VBA staff also partners with Homeless staff when they present at area shelters on a monthly basis. Homeless Team staff help homeless Veterans apply for entitlements including Social Security, unemployment, fuel

assistance, and food stamps. These applications are handled within days of the Veteran entering the VA Homeless program. Vocational support is provided by the VA CT Supportive Employment program and Certified Work Therapy. Homeless Team members also partner with the State of CT Dept of Labor Veterans' Employment Reintegration Program. State DOL staff are located in each region of the state and are an important referral source to the Homeless Program. VA CT also makes referrals to State of CT Benefit Specialists who help prepare benefit applications. Three new Supportive Employment positions, now being hired, will be embedded in the VA Homeless Program in early 2011 to enhance employment opportunities. These specialists will be Veterans who have experienced job loss and/or homelessness.

Expansion/Enhancement of Income/Employment/Benefits:

- A. Continue to expand collaborative efforts with the Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA) at the Errera Community Center, at the VA Medical Centers, and at local shelters and soup kitchens in under-served areas.
- B. Work more closely with Federal Social Security Office; complete SORES training and educate Veterans in how to secure SSI benefits.
- C. Hire new supportive employment specialists and embed them in homeless programs and monitor their success in finding jobs for Veterans in VASH and other housing programs.
- D. Work on special initiatives in private sector to create employment with large employers in the state. One such model is a partnership with the Subway Corporation where Subway would contribute funding towards the start-up of Veteran owned Subway franchises.
- E. Collaborate with Ability Beyond Disability, a well established service provider willing to accept State Dept of Mental Health (DHMAS), Ticket to Work, and VA Chapter 31 monies to expand coverage to Veterans in their catchments area.
- F. Elderly Services: Vocational services will refer elderly homeless Veterans to work at East Seals Goodwill, STRIVE, as well as several community and long term rehabilitation centers as an alternative to hospital based Transitional Work.
- G. FY2010-11, Homeless Veterans will constitute a special population that is eligible for vocational services without having to qualify as a Veteran suffering from PTSD or other psychiatric diagnosis.

Community Partnerships

Homeless Team members have engaged with a rich array of community partners throughout Connecticut. Local Continuum of Care committees, homeless service providers, non-profit housing developers, local businesses and civic groups, Veteran Service organizations, and faith based groups have all been brought in to and support the Secretary's goal identified in the Five Year Plan to End Veteran homelessness. These private and non-profit groups enhance VA services and provide the one thing each homeless Veteran deserves: welcome and support in the local community. New partnerships are developing around permanent housing for Veteran families, around vocational and employment opportunities, and with social and recreational programs. All of these efforts enrich services and enhance the lives and stability of homeless Veterans. A Homeless Summit was held in February 2011 with wide participation from community leaders from public and private sectors.

VA CT- Existing Programs and Community Partnerships:

The VA CT Homeless Program has created many working partnerships with service providers and housing agencies around CT. We currently do the following:

- Actively participate in Ten Continuum of Care Committees in New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, Danbury, Southeast Ct, Manchester, Bristol, Torrington, and Balance of State.
- Work with Ten Year Plan committees in Middletown, Danbury, Norwalk, Southeast CT, and Waterbury.
- Participate with Journey Home of Greater Hartford on the 100,000 Homes Campaign.
- Work closely with homeless advocates and housing providers in New Haven (Columbus House, Leeway, and New Haven Home Recovery), Hartford (Chrysalis Center, Mercy Housing, the South Park Inn), Jewett City (the American Legion Post 115), New London (the Homeless Hospitality Center), Norwich (Norwich Soup Kitchen) and Windham/Manchester (the Windham Regional Community Council and MAC Shelter), and Fairfield County (Homes for the Brave, Alpha Community Services, Supportive Housing Works, Stamford Shelter for the Homeless, Operation Hope, and New Neighborhoods).
- Weekly engagement with homeless clinics at soup kitchens and shelters in Norwich, New London, Hartford, Norwalk, Meriden, New Haven, and Waterbury.
- Collaborate with the CT Dept of Labor Veterans Vocational Reintegration programs in Bridgeport, New London, New Haven, Hartford, and Waterbury.
- Work with State Dept of Veteran Affairs on Annual Veteran Stand Down event, access to the state's 350 bed domiciliary, and Veteran Services Officers.
- Collaborate with HUD Office (Hartford) and U.S. Interagency Council to End Homelessness Regional office (Boston).
- Collaborate with the CT Dept of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Military Support and Jail

Diversion programs, as well as CT Dept of Social Services.

- Participate on committees of the CT Coalition to End Homelessness, the CT Housing Partnership, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, CT Coalition to End Homelessness, and Supportive Housing Works and educate members about the Veteran Homelessness issues.
- Collaborate with Veteran Service Organizations and Veteran advocate groups in Derby, Middletown, Prospect, Newington, Branford, Newtown, Jewett City, Waterbury, Windham, and Danbury.
- Participate at community education and advocacy events with providers and partners established by the CT Coalition to End Homelessness, Corp for Supportive Housing, and Partnership for Strong Communities.
- Attend the annual Stand Down at Rocky Hill, Project Homeless Connect events in five communities, and the annual Point in Time Count in numerous regions in the state.
- Engage college student groups (University of New Haven, Quinnipiac College, and Southern Ct State University) to help with homeless Veteran support projects, especially donating basic need items and furniture.
- Engage dozens of private citizens and civic organizations to make donations of furniture, winter clothing, welcome baskets, and basic need items for the homeless.
- Solicit support for VA CT furniture warehouse which is filled with items for Veteran apartments including large furniture as well as small accessories like dishes, kitchen and bath supplies, and bed coverings.
- Encourage and assist citizen volunteers and faith based groups to shop for household items and plan fund-raisers to help outfit Veteran apartments.
- Support the growing Veteran law clinic that has brought in lawyers from different disciplines to help support Veterans around housing, child support, child custody, minor infractions, DWI, and tax issues.

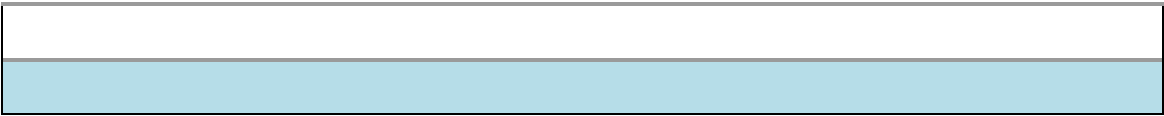
Operational Plan for Enhancement/ Expansion of Community Partnerships.

Expansion of community partnerships in the next year will be focused towards service providers who work with families and those who work with the chronically homeless, as well as reaching under-served areas of CT.

- Continue partnership building in Fairfield County where high cost of housing leaves many Veteran households having a difficulty obtaining housing. Partner with New Neighborhoods, Stamford Shelter for the Homeless, Supportive Housing Inc, and Homes for the Brave.
- Join the Bridgeport Family Housing First program and bring VASH resources to the group to assist Veteran households and families in Bridgeport.
- Renew VA outreach in New Haven, Milford, and the Naugatuck Valley to renew partnerships with shelters, service agencies, and local homeless providers, especially Ansonia YMCA, Alpha Community Services, New Haven Home Recovery, Columbus House, and Homes for the Brave,
- Expand partnerships in Northeastern CT with the Access Agency and with Windham Regional Community Council. Support a new G&PD application from this area.
- Strengthen partnerships in Bristol and Plainville with the St Vincent DePaul and other agencies and in Meriden/Wallingford with the homeless shelters and soup kitchens there.
- Participation on the state committee of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, "Opening Doors" federal plan to end homelessness.
- Work with the community agencies that will administer HEARTH Act Homeless Prevention Funds as well as those agencies that are awarded Veteran Support Service grants for families.

Listing of new partners to engage in FY 2011:

New Community Partners	Location	Service
Access Agency	Danielson	Family shelter
Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center	Stonington	Food pantry
MASH Shelter	Mystic	Shelter for the homeless
WARM Shelter	Westerly, RI	Shelter for the homeless
Meriden Housing Authority	Meriden	Housing for Veterans
Meriden Homeless Shelter	Meriden	Shelter for the homeless
Wallingford Veterans Office	Wallingford	Public advocate for Veterans
Eddy Shelter	Middletown	Shelter for the homeless
St Vincent DePaul Soup Kitchen	Middletown	Soup kitchen
Faith Tabernacle CDC	New Haven	Community housing provider
St Vincent DePaul	Bristol	St Vincent DePaul
Norwalk City Shelter	Norwalk	City shelter
Family and Children Agency of Norwalk	Norwalk	Service provider
Pacific Shelter	Stamford	Shelter provider
McCall Foundation	Winsted	Service provider
CT Dept of Social Services	Hartford	Section 8 Housing supports
Non-Profit Housing of Danbury	Danbury	Permanent housing provider
Waterbury Housing Authority	Waterbury	Public Housing provider
Beth El Shelter	Milford	Non-profit shelter provider
Emmanuel Baptist Shelter	New Haven	Faith based shelter
St Luke's Community Services	Stamford	Service provider
Alpha Community Services	Bridgeport	Service provider
Ansonia YMCA	Ansonia	Housing for Veterans



SUMMARY AND THE WAY AHEAD

VA CT has many tools in place to outreach and engage Homeless Veterans, at same time help them access treatment and medical care, and offer housing for them in transitional and permanent housing. On any given night, 154 homeless Veterans are resting in VA sponsored transitional housing. 185 more Veterans have living in fully furnished VASH apartments with case management. And 26 Veterans have moved into new permanent supportive housing apartments, with case managers on site. In FY 2011, this aggressive outreach and service to homeless Veterans will move forward to obtain new positive outcomes for our Veterans. Exciting new housing will be built, HUD-VASH vouchers will be offered, and new treatment models will be undertaken. VA CT expects to utilize its resources and those of innumerable community partners, to lower the homeless Veterans numbers by 20% in Connecticut.

