

Interim guidance for homeless service providers to plan and respond to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)-Veterans

Recommendations:

At this time, the recommendations of the VT Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH) and the VT Veteran's Committee on Homelessness (VVCH) are in alignment for addressing this global pandemic as it may impact Veterans in VT experiencing homelessness. Please refer to VCEH's website for the most up-to-date information: <https://helpingtohousevt.org/>

Referrals:

It remains best practice for all homeless service providers to connect and refer any self-identified, or confirmed, Veteran to your local homeless emergency response system per your current practices. If a Veteran is identified and is homeless, it is recommended to offer and support emergency housing services, paying particular attention to specific guidance issued by various partners in the State of VT.

- Statewide recommendations for emergency shelter operations have been produced and distributed. [Steps for immediate action for homeless providers](#)
- Statewide measures have been enacted to ensure that all persons, including Veterans, who are deemed hyper-vulnerable will be supported with access to safe, emergency shelter options. [ESD's new eligibility category "hyper-vulnerable"](#)

Additional options:

In addition, there is newly issued guidance ("Available Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Resources to Place Homeless Veterans at High-Risk of COVID-19") for Veterans enrolled in an SSVF program. Currently in VT, there are 2 providers (SSVF @ UVM and Veterans Inc.). This guidance permits SSVF providers to support enrolled, homeless Veterans in alternative and interim housing under very specific situations.

Please note this is only for a specific population of Veterans and is not a broad stroke for all homeless Veterans, as outlined in the memo:

"It is important to note that such temporary housing placements are only available to eligible, homeless Veteran households enrolled in SSVF who need placement into permanent housing."

Each SSVF provider will enact this guidance ([SSVF enrolled Veterans-COVID 19](#)) for Veterans enrolled in their services as appropriate.

Coordinated Entry:

The VVCH and VCEH continue to support a joint effort of rapid identification and response through established Coordinated Entry procedures. Please continue your adherence to these approved policy measures. [Balance of State CE Veterans Policy](#) & [Chittenden County Homeless Alliance CE Veterans Policy](#)

Service Provision:

With the current global pandemic of COVID-19, VA homeless service providers, like much of the population, are being asked to limit face to face contacts except for in urgent clinical situations. Out of an abundance of caution, services provided to Veterans enrolled in VA homeless programs (i.e. shelter, Grant and Per Diem, HUD VASH, and Healthcare for Homeless Veterans or HCHV) will be limited to phone, video conferencing or electronic communication. Additional limitations may be extended to other Veteran homeless service provider agencies, as each deem necessary. This practice of social distancing currently extends to Veterans wishing to receive all Mental Health care at a VA site. For Veterans needing VA Mental Health access, it is recommended they call 802-295-9363 x 5760 to coordinate their care needs. Presently, Veterans wishing to access VA's Primary Care services are asked to call their VA provider directly before coming to an appointment. They can do this by calling VA Telephone Triage at 802-295-9363 x 6364 before they come in to the clinic or facility if they are in need of medical care. Veterans can also access their healthcare needs by sending a Secure Message to their provider using MyHealthVet.

Additionally, restrictions are in place with regard to visitors to the VA Medical Center in White River Junction and all of its Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC's). All Veterans are encouraged to follow the recommendations of the CDC with regard to concerns about symptoms or exposure to COVID-19.

Additional Resources:

Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Vermont Department of Health, Infectious Disease Hotline: (802) 863-7240, Option 1.
<https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/infectious-disease>

Vermont 211: <http://www.vermont211.org/>

VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans: 1-877-424-3838

VA's National Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255, Press 1

VA's Secure Messaging MyHealthVet: <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/>