

HVC-1-07
HOMELESS VETERANS AS A “SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATION”

This Resolution amends HTF-1-05 by incorporating HTF-2-05, A “FAIR SHARE” OF FUNDING FOR HOMELESS VETERANS PROGRAMS & SERVICES to create a more comprehensive resolution.

Issue: The number of homeless veterans is very fluid. However, nationally it is accepted that 23-30% of the total homeless population, or approximately 194,000, are homeless veterans. While federal agencies acknowledge these statistics, they have yet to identify these veterans as a “Special Needs Population.” Veterans make up a significant percentage (23-30%) of the homeless population in America. Homeless veterans are due a “Fair Share” of the available federal dollars for programs and services funded in the United States.

Background: Our country’s homeless problem is a national disgrace that refuses to fade. Homelessness has varied definitions and many contributing factors. Among these are PTSD, a lack of job skills and education, substance abuse and mental-health problems. The homeless require far more than just a home. A comprehensive, individualized assessment and a rehabilitation/treatment program are necessary, utilizing the “continuum of care” concept. Assistance in obtaining economic stability for a successful self-sufficient transition back into the community is vital. Although many need help with permanent housing, some require long-term residential care.

In some cases, agencies deal inappropriately, without sensitivity to the particular needs and issues of the homeless, especially to those of veterans. Because homeless veterans do present with unique issues surrounding their military experiences, we consider them a “Special Needs Population”. Until homeless veterans achieve status as a “Special Needs Population” through legislative action, monies earmarked by Congress to combat homelessness will fail to reach programs specifically designated for these veterans.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers the funds set aside by the McKinney-Vento Act. Admitting by its own computations that veterans approximate 23-30% of the entire homeless population in America, HUD would have us believe that it is, in fact, reaching this population by providing a general, overall relief effort to the homeless in America. With the “special needs” status of other populations in America receiving specifically allocated funding, veterans are once again having to fight a war on the home front to obtain rights and benefits that should rightfully be theirs. Veterans are not specifically targeted in funding, and the money is wasted on stopgap measures. Mission-type meal providers and overnight cots are well intentioned, but they change nothing and solve nothing. This resolution amends HTF-1-05

Resolved, That: Vietnam Veterans of America, urges the Presidential Interagency Council on Homeless to recognize homeless veterans as a Special Needs Population. Further, we urge Congress to require all entities/agencies, including non-profit or governmental, that receive/utilize federal program funding dollars, to report statistics on the number of veterans they serve, their residential status, and the services needed. Vietnam Veterans of America strongly urges its membership, at the chapter and state council level, to work with their state and federal legislators to enhance services to

homeless veterans and encourage them to recognize these veterans as a “Special Needs Population.” Additionally, Vietnam Veterans of America supports legislation that would incorporate a “Fair Share” dollar approach for the federal funding of all homeless programs and services so to specifically target homeless veterans.

HVC-6-07

VA HOMELESS GRANT AND PER DIEM FUNDING

Issue: Funding and support of the VA HGPD Program has proven to be a most effective tool in addressing veteran homelessness.

Background: VA Homeless Grant and Per Diem funding must be considered a payment rather than a reimbursement for expenses, an important change that will enable the community-based organizations that deliver the majority of these services to operate effectively. Per Diem dollars received by services centers are not capable of obtaining or retaining appropriate staffing to provide services supporting the “special needs” of the veterans seeking assistance. Per Diem for Service Centers is provided on an hourly rate, currently only \$3.91 per hour.

Service centers are unique and indispensable in the VA process. In many cases they are the front and first exposure to the VA and VA Homeless Grant and Per Diem programs. Veteran specific service centers are vital in that most city and municipality social services do not have the knowledge or capacity to provide appropriate supportive services that directly involve the treatment, care and entitlements of veterans. Additionally, since many local municipalities have removed “supportive services” from their HUD Continuums of Care, providing staffing dollars through the VA Homeless Grant and Per Diem program, similar to the Special Needs Grant process, to those agencies operating HGPD service centers would provide the funding necessary to continue these services. Without consideration of staffing grants, the result could be the demise of these critical services. The VA acknowledges this problem exists. It is yet to be specifically identified how many awarded services center grantees have been affected by either the inability to establish these centers or retain operation because of this very funding issue.

Resolved, That: Vietnam Veterans of America urges the Department of Veterans Affairs, Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program to provide “payment for services” rather than the “reimbursement for services” it presently provides. Additionally, VVA supports and seeks legislation to establish Supportive Services Assistance Grants for VA Homeless Grant and Per Diem Service Center Grant Awardees.