

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
JACK C. MONTGOMERY VA MEDICAL CENTER (JCMVAMC)

FY 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

HOMELESS AND COMPENSATED WORK THERAPY PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

Fiscal Year 2014 marked another year of growth and change in the Homeless and Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) programs. Diligent work by staff in both programs has helped the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center get closer to reaching the VA Secretary's goal of eradicating Veteran homelessness by 2015. The six pillars identified in the plan are outreach/education, treatment services, prevention services, housing/supportive services, income/employment/benefits and community partnerships. The following annual report is a snapshot and a review of services being provided.

Programs are broken out into four program areas: Outreach, Transition Services, Permanent Housing and Work Therapy. Over 1,004 unique Veterans were treated by Homeless Program staff in FY14, a slight decrease from the 1,032 served in FY13, but an increase from the 788 served in FY 12 and 650 served in FY11. This small decrease is likely attributed to no additional HUD-VASH vouchers in FY14 and decrease in GPD bed capacity in FY14. Compensated Work Therapy programs also noted a slight decrease in FY14 with 211 Veterans receiving CWT services. In FY13, 235 unique Veterans were treated which was a slight increase from 214 in FY 12 and 200 in FY11. This slight decrease can be attributed to the transition of the Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Program and the Supported Employment job vacancy. Although unique Veterans treated was slightly lower, the number of visits staff had with Veterans increased. Between Homeless and CWT programs, there were over 11,500 encounters made with Veterans seeking services from these programs which marks an increase from FY13, wherein, 10,788 Veteran encounters occurred.

OUTREACH

- ***Introduction:***

Homeless outreach services at the JCMVAMC expanded during FY 2014, as part of the VA's 5-year plan to end Veteran homelessness. The core of the VA Homeless Program is to reach homeless Veterans in shelters, on the streets or other locations not meant for human habitation to assist with obtaining benefits and linkage with services to end homelessness.

Outreach Services are broken into the following programs:

HOMELESS OUTREACH

- ***Current Services:***

1. *Outreach*-During FY 2014, outreach was conducted on a weekly basis at various shelters, soup kitchens, camps and other locations as identified by community referrals to include rural areas. Due to outreach staff expansion, VA Homeless Program staff are able to conduct street and encampment outreach. VA outreach team members and peer specialist team up with a community outreach group at least monthly to target encampments and chronically homeless Veterans. Outreach staff also continue to actively participate in an outreach encampment workgroup to aid in identifying the most vulnerable individuals living on the streets and in encampments.

2. *Prevention*- Homeless staff also provided homeless prevention services to Veterans calling into the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, Veterans walking into the hospital or outpatient clinic, and referrals from VA providers or community partners. The JCMVAMC received 287 National Call Center referrals in FY14, 319 in FY13 and 210 in FY12. Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) staff provided outreach and identified legally involved Veterans through collaboration with local courts and jails. VJO staff assist with transition from incarceration to community reintegration through education, advocacy and referrals.

3. *MHICM RANGE*- The Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM) Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement (RANGE) began at the JCMVAMC in May 2010 providing services to Veterans diagnosed with a severe mental illness. This program also provides homeless outreach services in rural communities and partners with Homeless Program staff to ensure coordination of care and proper referrals.

4. *Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF, locally known as BRRX & KI BOIS)*- In FY2011 the Community Service Council of Tulsa was awarded the SSVF grant and KI BOIS in FY2013 offering homeless prevention services, including case management and financial assistance, to Veterans and their families. VA staff meet with BRRX and KI BOIS staff monthly and with appropriate releases, staff mutual Veteran cases.

5. *Stand Down*- Each fall, a Stand Down for Homeless Veterans is organized to serve as an efficient outreach method to reach Veterans in the community. The JCMVAMC Homeless and CWT program co-hosted the 2014 Stand Down with a church and numerous other community partners in Tulsa. This event served 265 Veterans and 132 civilians, a marked increase from the 2013 event which served 172 Veterans and 62 civilians. Over 50 community agencies/partners participated in the event with over 200 volunteers.

6. *Education*- The JCMVAMC Public Affairs office created an educational video of Homeless and CWT programs in FY11. This video is used during community presentations and posted on the local website to provide an overview of services available.

- ***New Initiatives:***

1. The Homeless Outreach team developed business cards, magnets and bags which contain information regarding the team's outreach schedule. These items are distributed to individual Veterans and community partners to educate Veterans about VA homeless staff availability in the community.
2. Began outreach efforts once a month at Cherokee Nation's Veteran Center in Tahlequah, OK in August 2014.

- **Performance Analysis of Outreach:**

Performance Measure	FY 2014 Benchmark	FY 2013 Results	FY 2014 Results	Measure of concern
% of Veterans engaged in VA Homeless services who are unsheltered (i.e. street, encampment, etc.)	25%	n/a- new measure	33%	None

TRANSITION SERVICES

- **Introduction:**

The purpose of transitional housing services is to promote the development and provision of supportive housing and/or supportive services with the goal of helping homeless Veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and/or income, and obtain greater self-determination.

Transitional Housing Services are broken into the following programs:

- **Current Services:**

1. **Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) contracts- 45 admissions & 33 discharges (including designated emergency beds):**

- a. *12 & 12, Inc.*- This contract offers 4 beds per month to homeless female Veterans for up to 6 months who have a substance use disorder or co-occurring disorder. If beds are not occupied by female Veterans, male Veterans can be considered for admission. Veterans participate in individual and group counseling, receive case management services and either work, volunteer or attend school. The JCMVAMC spent \$55,620 on this contract in FY14 with an average occupancy rate of 68%.
- b. *Walker Hall(discontinued in January 2014- see new initiative below for more information about transition)*- This contract offered 3 beds per month to homeless female and male Veterans for up to 6 months who have a mental health or co-occurring disorder. Veterans participate in case management and either work, volunteer or attend school. The JCMVAMC spent \$10,926.96 on this contract in FY14.
- c. *Yale Apartments*- Effective January 2014, this contract increased its capacity from 10 to 13 beds per month to homeless female and male veterans for up to 6 months who have a mental health or co-occurring disorder. Three of these 10 beds are designated as emergency beds with a goal of providing interim residence while awaiting admission to another housing program. Veterans participate in case management and either work, volunteer or attend school. VA Central Office awarded funds for this contract and \$153,710.40 was expended in FY14 for this contract with an average occupancy rate of 89%.

2. **Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD)- 67 admissions and 53 discharges:**

- a. *Bryce House*- This GPD program offers 31 beds for up to 24 months to homeless male Veterans in recovery from a substance use disorder or co-occurring disorder. Veterans participate in individual and group counseling, receive case management services and either work, volunteer or attend school. During a Veteran’s first year of residency at Bryce House, they will be charged 10% of their income and 20% during their second year. With these modifications, Veterans will be better able to pay off outstanding debts/fines and build savings faster to ensure successful transition to independent housing. In FY 14, \$424,656.50 was expended on this grant project with a 90% occupancy rate.

- b. *Liberty House*- In 2011, the Restoring Lives Program was awarded a GPD capital and per diem grant to offer an additional 25 beds to homeless males. This program’s target population was homeless Veterans released from incarceration and those recovering from substance use disorders. In FY 14, \$66,447.00 was expended on this grant project. In March 2014, Veterans transitioned to another GPD program, HCHV contract or independent housing. In August 2014, the Restoring Lives and JCMVAMC Homeless Program staff were notified by the VA Under Secretary for Health that the Restoring Lives Program was terminated from the GPD program due to their inability to perform under the conditions of the grant.

- ***New Initiatives:***

The JCMVAMC contract with the Mental Health Association of Oklahoma (MHAO and previously known as Mental Health Association of Tulsa) for Walker Hall was repurposed in January 2014 to eliminate beds at Walker Hall and increase bed availability at Yale Apartments for homeless Veterans. Both properties are owned and operated by MHAO. Walker Hall is currently utilized to house young adults transitioning from foster care.

Performance Analysis of Transition Services:

Performance Measure	FY 2014 Benchmark	FY 2013 Results (FY13 target-60%)	FY 2014 Results	Measure of concern
% of Veterans discharged to independent housing from GPD program	65% (increase from FY13)	62.26%	63.27%	Transition of Veterans from terminated GPD project resulted in not meeting national target in FY14. Operational GPD program met target at 75%- not a measure of concern

PERMANENT HOUSING

- **Introduction:** The Housing and Urban Development-VA Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) Program is a joint venture between Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and VA. This program began at the JCMVAMC in 2008. It involves intensive case management related to resolving issues that have the potential to destabilize the Veteran and/or Veteran's family stability in the community and/or reinforcing supports or access to services that can help offer additional stability. Veterans who participate in the program receive a housing voucher that subsidizes their rent.

- **Current Services:**
 1. *HUD-VASH* –In FY14, the HUD-VASH program maintained availability of 185 housing choice vouchers for the JCMVAMC catchment area. The program continues to focus on the most vulnerable populations, including Veterans who are chronically homeless, served during OEF/OIF, have families, women, and those with disabilities.
 2. *Substance Use Disorder Specialist (SUD Specialist)*- In November 2010, the JCMVAMC hired a HUD-VASH SUD Specialist with VA Central Office initiative funds. Although funded under the HUD-VASH initiative, the specialist is able to assist Veterans in other homeless programs as well (i.e. GPD, HCHV, etc.). The SUD specialist provides case management and supportive therapy to homeless Veterans in the community. This worker provides Social Work interventions for individuals, families and groups. The specialist acts as a liaison with community agencies and coordinates community-based services including referrals to or from VA programs, government programs, and community agency programs. Currently, the SUD specialist provides a SUD group at one of the HCHV contract sites and the local non-profit agency, Coffee Bunker.
 3. The HUD-VASH program continues to send referrals to the DAV based on the informal agreement with a local chapter who has agreed to provide household items (i.e. furniture) to Veterans participating in a VA Homeless Program.

- **New Initiatives:**
 1. The HUD-VASH program received notification in FY14 that 21 additional vouchers will be allocated to the Tulsa Housing Authority in the first quarter of FY2015. This will bring the total number of vouchers available to Veterans in the JCMVAMC catchment area to 206.
 2. Efforts to meet the chronically homeless Veteran performance measure resulted in the implementation of a change to the intake process wherein Veterans are provided a timeline form to aid in helping them better identify episodes of homelessness.
 3. In May 2014, the Tulsa Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Program Manager began running a monthly report of the number of chronically homeless Veterans utilizing the

local shelter system. He provided these names to the local shelter staff who, in turn, referred the identified Veterans to VA Homeless outreach staff. Outreach staff would then make an effort to engage the Veterans and determine their interest in the HUD-VASH program.

- **Performance Analysis of Permanent Housing:**

Performance Measure	FY 2014 Benchmark	FY 2013 Results	FY 2014 Results	Measure of concern
% vouchers issued that resulted in a homeless Veteran achieving resident status in Public Housing Authority (point in time)	90% (increase from 88% in FY13)	91.88%	90.81%	None
% of chronically homeless Veterans admitted to HUD-VASH	65%	45%	50%	Data provided by HMIS indicates minimal # of chronically homeless veterans

WORK THERAPY

- **Introduction:** The Compensated Work Therapy programs are based on a recovery-oriented model and offer a continuum of work restoration services. Veterans are financially compensated for their work and in turn, improve their economic and social well-being as they prepare for community re-entry.
- **Current Services:**
 1. **Transitional Work (TW)-** Contracts are negotiated with participating industries (including the VA and other agencies) for therapeutic work assignments. Veterans provide labor as part of their overall treatment program and vocational plan. The purpose is to develop skills to facilitate their transition into the competitive work environment. TW reflects the realities of the competitive workplace. Work is performed under the supervision of a VA employee and indirectly under the supervision of the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist. On average, a Veteran participates in the TW program for 6 months, but if clinically indicated, can remain in the TW program longer. The TW program served 80 Veterans in FY14. Veterans in TW worked a total of 47,088.59 hours and received a total of \$342,741.06 in paid therapeutic benefits.
 2. **Supported Employment (SE)-** SE is designed to expand vocational opportunities for Veterans with severe mental illness by emphasizing job accommodation, community-based employment, support and long-term follow-up. Employment specialists seek and locate real jobs in the

community that match veterans' interests, skills and ability to work, even if only for a few hours a week. The SE program served 24 Veterans in FY14.

3. *Homeless Veteran Vocational Development Program (VocDev)*- The Homeless Vocational Development program (similar to and previously known as the Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Program) provides assistance in locating and maintaining competitive community professions for homeless Veterans who require assistance in career seeking and job stability, and have a desire for meaningful work. There are two primary differences between HVSEP and Voc Dev service provision. First, VocDev can serve Veterans who are actively involved in a VA Homeless Program and those who are at risk of homelessness. Second, Voc Dev services are nationally funded by Homeless Program office versus the CWT office, therefore, benefit protection is not available under the Voc Dev program.
Vocational Development is a partnership among the Veteran and Employment Specialist in determining the goals and abilities of the Veteran, and designing and implementing a plan of action to make those ambitions and passions a reality. The Voc Dev program served 74 unique Veterans.

- ***New Initiatives:***

In May 2014, the National Homeless Program office dispersed funding to all VA sites for a Community Employment Coordinator (CEC). The CEC will be responsible for development of a community collaborative group to enhance employment opportunities for homeless Veterans. This position will enhance opportunities to build relationships with employers.

- ***Performance Analysis of Work Therapy:***

Performance Measure	FY 2014 Benchmark	FY 2013 Results	FY 2014 Results (total caseload)	Measure of concern
Ensure employment, schooling or volunteer opportunities for Veterans discharging from CWT programs (TWE)	40%	63%	45%	None
Ensure employment, schooling or volunteer opportunities for Veterans discharging from CWT programs (SE)	40%	50%	41%	None
Percentage of Veterans participating in Voc Dev program employed	35%	42% (HVSEP program performance)	39%	None

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK ABOUT HOMELESS AND CWT SERVICES

An analysis of complaints and feedback from Veterans and Stakeholders resulted in the following actions:

- Stakeholder surveys from various VA Services and community partners convey an overwhelming appreciation for the collaborative and supportive services provided by both the Homeless and CWT Programs.
- Some Licensed Independent Practitioners (LIPs) indicated that at times obtaining a consult for some CWT services from a prescribing provider creates a barrier for Veterans seeking services. The CWT Plan of Care was modified in FY14 based on the CWT national handbook indicating that all LIPs can submit consult requests for CWT participation, in effect, broadening the referral base for CWT participation.
- Local shelter who serves the most homeless individuals in the city, requested additional day of outreach. As a result, homeless outreach staff added an additional day of outreach to this shelter.
- Based on TWE supervisor feedback and ongoing inquiries related to their responsibility within the program, the TWE Program Coordinator and CWT Program Manager organized a mandatory training for all supervisors. The VA's Privacy Officer, Information Security Officer and Chief of Social Work were present to offer input and field questions related to Veteran care while participating in the TWE program.
- Supervisors often seek to hire TWE's assigned to their service due to the quality work the Veterans provide.

OPPORTUNITIES

- *Ending Homelessness* – With anticipated growth in the HUD-VASH program and the addition of 2 contract beds at Yale Apartments, the JCMVAMC is closer to meeting the goal of ending Veteran homelessness. Although development of the Five-Year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness appears to target only the Homeless Program, there is a large impact on the CWT program due to homeless Veterans often seeking work therapy and employment opportunities. Monthly monitoring and necessary updates to the operational plan will be made to assist with reaching the goal to eradicate Veteran homelessness.

- *Outreach-* To maximize the effectiveness of outreach efforts in FY15, outreach staff will restart outreach efforts at Salvation Army. Shelter administration has identified available space for VA staff to be available during their noon meal.
- *Networking-* All Homeless and CWT staff attend at least one community meeting per month to ensure ongoing communication with community partners about program availability. It further enables VA staff to learn about essential resources available for Veterans outside of the VA.
- *Collaboration-* MOU signed by Medical Center Director indicating VA's support and willingness to participate in the Tulsa Continuum of Care's Zero: 2016. The national initiative offers support to communities with the goal of ending Veteran homelessness by 2015 and ending chronic homelessness by 2016.

****Attached is FY14 outcome tracking report which includes Veteran and stakeholder satisfaction data*

Melanie Goldman

Homeless/CWT Program Manager