



Volunteers of America: Homeless Veterans Services

Background

Since 1896, Volunteers of America has responded to community needs with compassion and consistency. When the United States entered World War I, Volunteers of America focused its efforts on “Holding the Home Lines.” Care for children and housing for women expanded, and canteens and accommodations were opened for servicemen. Again in World War II, Volunteers of America expanded and adapted services to support servicemen, as well as mothers engaged in defense work. New programs opened to combat rising juvenile delinquency. In 1950, the organization initiated a campaign against “widespread public indifference and even hostility to men in uniform.” As homelessness reached crisis proportion in the 1980s, homeless veterans began showing up in increasing numbers in our emergency shelters. When the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs initiated support for homeless veteran services in 1987, Volunteers of America quickly partnered, opening new housing and support services for homeless veterans. Today, Volunteers of America is at the forefront of the issue of homelessness for veterans—as a service provider and an advocate.

Program Scope

We serve more than 10,000 homeless veterans annually through housing and services, including:

- Transitional housing for veterans (grant and per diem programs)
- Homeless Veterans Re-Integration Programs (employment and training)
- Permanent supportive housing programs for homeless veterans
- Service centers
- Mobile Service Center
- Transitional housing programs, licensed as alcohol and drug treatment centers
- Special needs grants for the chronically mentally ill and frail elderly
- Incarcerated Veterans Transitional Programs (employment)

Assistance for Homeless Veterans

Volunteers of America is committed to ending homelessness for those on the street and preventing others from becoming homeless by providing a wide array of well-designed and managed services to meet the specific needs of homeless veterans. Services include:

Housing: Transitional housing is provided for homeless veterans and their families. Comprehensive support services include outreach and assessment, emergency services and case management. Volunteers of America also offers Transitional Treatment Programs, providing residential therapeutic treatment for veterans recovering from substance addiction, and special need services for the frail elderly and veterans with mental illness.

Service Centers: Locating and connecting with homeless veterans is a key to the success of all Volunteers of America’s programs. In some locations integrated service centers are provided, where veterans have access to a full array of services in one location. Volunteers of America also operates a mobile service center, reaching out to veterans by providing medical and dental care and access to benefits and services.

Employment and Training: Homeless veterans are prepared to reenter the labor force through employment and training, as well as connecting to community support services. A special feature of the program includes outreach from veterans who have experienced homelessness themselves. Employment programs also include Compensated Work Therapy, through which veterans learn new job skills. Volunteers of America also operates Incarcerated Veterans Transitional Programs, reintegrating veterans exiting the corrections system into their home communities.