

April 27, 2010

Alderman Leonard J. Gentile
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

RE: Veteran House Project

Dear Alderman Gentile:

At the April 26, 2010 Finance Committee meeting, you asked that I write a letter to you with regard to administration of the VASH vouchers that will be used to provide a rental subsidy to the prospective veterans who will inhabit the 2 units at 2148-50 Commonwealth Avenue.

CAN-DO will rent the 2 units to homeless veterans and their families. Our partner the Boston VA Healthcare for the Homeless Office will provide vouchers to the veterans as long as they participate in case management and supportive services at the Jamaica Plains VA. The VA makes the determination of eligibility for the voucher. Once the veteran is eligible he/she can go to a local housing authority, that administers the VASH program, and complete an application. For this region the possible locations are Boston, Cambridge and Braintree.

At the first meeting when the project was considered, you expressed a desire for the VASH vouchers to be administered by the Newton Housing Authority. Since that time you have been informed by Jon Hacker of the Newton Housing Authority (NHA) that it is not currently one of the local housing authorities that administers the VASH vouchers and that it has no plans to become one.

Despite that you still would like them to have a role in the administration of the vouchers because you believe that would ensure more local control. You were told by Jon Hacker that in some instances housing authorities swap vouchers. It is my understanding that once the veteran is awarded a voucher you want such a swap to take place. None of us knows whether this program allows a swap in the same way as occurs with a regular Section 8 voucher. That determination will be made by the VA. But if such a swap can occur, CAN-DO has no problem with such a swap and will cooperate as needed.

Sincerely,

Josephine McNeil
Executive Director

Cc: Jon Hacker

QUESTIONS about the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Program

Dept. of Housing & Urban Development & Dept. of Veterans Affairs

www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash/docs/hudvashqa.pdf

Can participating veterans live outside the immediate jurisdiction of the housing agency that issued their vouchers?

Yes.

... in most cases, only one public housing agency (PHA) was selected to partner with any given VA Medical Center (VAMC) [but] the vouchers are intended for homeless veterans living anywhere within the jurisdiction of the servicing VAMC. Therefore, families are not required to find a unit within the jurisdiction of the issuing PHA. Families may live in surrounding jurisdictions under voucher portability provisions, with the only limitation being that the VAMC must be able to provide case management services.

Which Massachusetts communities are participating in the program so far?

Awarding vouchers (February 2009 contacts):

- ◊ Boston (Thomas Ryan, tom.ryan@bostonhousing.org, 617-988-4538)
- ◊ Northampton (Jon Hite, jhite@hamphousing.org, 413-584-4030)
- ◊ Bedford (Mary-Anne Morrison, mary.anne.morrison@ocd.state.ma.us, 617-573-1208)

Have housed veterans through the program:

VA Medical Facility	HA Num	HA Name	2008 Units Award	2009 Units Award	Total Units Award
BOSTON	MA002	BOSTON HOUSING AUTHORITY	105	105	210
BOSTON	MA003	CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY	0	35	35
PROVIDENCE, RI/ NEW BEDFORD, MA	MA007	NEW BEDFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY	0	35	35
BOSTON/WORCESTER	MA012	WORCESTER HOUSING AUTHORITY	0	35	35
NORTHAMPTON	MA026	NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY	70	35	105
BOSTON/QUINCY	MA053	BRAINTREE HSG AUTHORITY	0	35	35
BEDFORD	MA108	CHELMSFORD HSG AUTHORITY	0	35	35
BEDFORD	MA901	COMM DEV PROG COMM OF MA.,E.O.C.D.	70	35	105
			245	350	595

What supportive services do veterans receive through the program?

The following pages provide a summary of the program’s case management system, drawn from presentations to 2008 and 2009 HUD/VA national satellite conferences, linked to this web page:

www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash/#3

NOTE: CAN –DO has arranged for additional supportive services for its Veteran House project in Newton, including day care and after school services, through The Second Step and the Newton Community Service Center.



HUD-VASH

Case Management System

Paul Smits, MSW
Associate Chief Consultant,

Roger Casey, PhD
Director, Grant and Per
Diem Program



Assessment

1. Confirm eligibility
2. Assess for suitability
 - If not housing ready, possible acceptance pending treatment in residential and/or inpatient setting
 - If not appropriate, alternative treatment plan developed
3. Determine need for other services to ensure adequate income, skills and support to maintain housing status once placed.
4. Multidisciplinary team to make determination on acceptance.



Principle Sources of Referral

1. HCHV Outreach staff
 - May make direct referrals from community to HUD-VASH.
 - Community education can generate referrals to VA from community providers (i.e. shelters, food kitchens, welfare offices, etc.)
2. VA Homeless Programs
 - Homeless Residential Treatment
 - Grant & Per Diem



Housing Placement

- Alert PHA of referral.
- As needed, assist veteran in completing and assembling required documentation.
- Following PHA guidelines, assist veteran in locating suitable housing.
- Request PHA inspection and approval of selected unit.
- Assist veteran and landlord to complete lease.
- Prepare for the move as needed providing guidance on turning on utilities, obtaining furnishings and supplies, and transportation to complete the move.

Case Management Goals

- Establish a therapeutic relationship.
- Provide support for long-term recovery by working towards treatment plan goals.
- Reassess needs and goals based on changing conditions. Inability to maintain sobriety does not generally lead to discharge from case management if veteran can maintain housing.
- Foster community integration and independence.
- Maintain veteran in housing.

Delivery of Services

- Coordinate VA and community interventions, acting as a liaison with critical partners (the landlord and other service providers).
- Make regular home visits to assess veteran's ability to maintain themselves in a safe environment that promotes sobriety, physical, and mental well being.
- Schedule individual and group meetings. Individual sessions will focus on treatment plan and current needs. Group meetings should foster peer support.
- Provide linkages for child care, medical coverage for family members (ex. Medicaid), family therapy, legal and income assistance programs.



HUD-VASH: The VA Perspective

Teresa S. Pittman, LCSW
HUD-VASH Program Analyst



Program Design

- **The HUD-VASH program was developed to provide case management and supportive services paired with a “Housing Choice” Section 8 voucher to eligible homeless Veterans**
- **HUD-VASH case managers work to maintain Veterans recovery and independence**
- **HUD-VASH has the opportunity to provide permanent, stable, and safe housing to homeless Veterans**



VA Side of HUD-VASH

- HUD-VASH is a partnership between the VA and HUD and VA case managers and PHAs
- Both sides need to work together to have good and timely outcomes
- For VA, case management is the heart of this program
- VA also needs other community partnerships to successfully implement this program – referrals from community, landlords, assistance with deposits, furniture, etc.



Community Partnerships

- PHAs
- HUD – Field Offices/ National Office
- Landlords
- Homeless Service Providers
- Veteran Service Organizations
- Law Enforcement/ Justice System
- Faith Based Organizations
- Local Homeless Continuum of Care
- Community at large



Program Requirements

- VA Health Care Eligible Veteran
- Homeless (McKinney Act Definition)
- Needs case management to obtain and sustain independently housed in the community
- Must agree to participate in the case management portion of the program



VA Case Managers

- “Community Reintegration Specialist”
- Evolving to team approach – CM, SUD, Peer Support, Housing Specialist
- Will network with community advocacy groups, service providers, landlords, and local homeless Continuum(s) of Care



VA Case Manager Functions

- Promote recovery from homelessness
 - * Mental health
 - * Substance use
 - * Physical health
- Assist Veteran to obtain treatment or services, as indicated
- Provide access to benefits & vocational services
- Assist with housing needs



Vital Functions of Case Management

Throughout the case management process:

- Assessment/ Reassessment
 - * Functioning
 - * Stability
 - * Progress on established goals
- Developing and revising mutually agreed upon goals and actions to accomplish those targets



VA Case Manager Basics

- Provide case management services in:
 - * VA setting
 - * Veteran's home
 - * Community settings
 - * Group settings
- Face to face meetings at least weekly
 - * Stop code 522
 - * Group meetings count as face to face
- Telephone contacts
 - * Stop code 530



Exit from Case Management

- Veterans ready to exit from case management will have:
 - * Developed skills
 - * Achieved sustained recovery from clinical symptoms
 - * Demonstrated ability to live independently
- Stage transition – fewer visits, longer time between visits
- Communicate with PHA at all stages