

BUILDING SOLUTIONS FOR VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ACT OF 2021

The Solutions for Veterans Homelessness Act

Outline and Summary

Section 1. Title and Table of Contents

Section 2. VA Capital Grants for Grant and Per Diem Recipients Adjustments

VA periodically awards capital grants to Grant and Per Die (GPD) recipients who provide services, such as housing, for veterans experiencing homelessness. A grant review process is currently underway for applications submitted in May 2021 and grants are to be awarded by October 2021. VA has also committed further CARES and ARP funds to at least one more grant period next year.

- Removes the matching grants requirement for VA capital grants for at least five years following enactment of this act, at which point the Secretary will have the option to require matching funds up to 30% of the cost of a project.
- Removes real property disposition requirements for past, present, and future grantees.

Section 3. VA GPD Rate Increase

Last December, as part of P.L. 116-315, Congress increased the maximum standard GPD rate to 115% of the state domiciliary rate. Congress also maxed the pandemic GPD rate at 300%, which remains in place until the public emergency declaration ends. Less than one-fifth of GPD regions are operating within the 115% threshold.

- Increases the standard GPD rate to 200%.

Section 4. Removes the Cap on Training and Technical Assistance Provided by the Homeless Program Office

VA provides training and technical assistance on how best to serve our nation's homeless veterans to Grant and Per Diem and Supportive Services for Veterans Families program recipients. This support is available during the funding application process and while these organizations are utilizing the funds.

- Removes the existing \$750,000 cap on funds for this support for the SSVF program.
- Codifies the training and technical assistance provision for the GPD program without a cap on use of funds.

Section 5. Report on Shallow Subsidies for the SSVF Program

VA has been test-driving a shallow subsidy program which increases funding to SSVF programs by up to 35% in certain regions with high costs of living. Unofficially, VA has committed to expanding this program availability nationwide and increasing the maximum boost to 50%.

- Requires VA to produce a report on the success of the program and data on the populations served by the program.

Section 6. Codifies and Expands the Pandemic-Era Health Care Navigators Program

As part of VA's Homeless Program Office's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, VA instituted a health care navigators program within SSVF, which helped veterans in that program struggling with housing with accessing health care, especially VA health care. It was deemed highly successful and VA has set aside funding for the program through at least FY22.

- Codifies and expands the program to a full case manager role empowered to connect veterans with any state, federal, local, and tribal resources and support they are eligible for.
- Allows GPD recipients to also apply for the funding and participate in the program.

Section 7. Creates a Pilot Program for Increasing Homeless Veterans' Access to Substance-Use Disorder Recovery Programs in the Community

Many veterans struggling with housing also struggle with substance use disorder, but many are either ineligible for recovery programs through VA or Medicaid or Medicare or the programs they are eligible for are not local or have very long wait-times for entry.

- Requires VA to establish a five-site, five-year pilot program providing grants to substance use disorder recovery programs in the community for those programs to provide their services to veterans who are homeless, were previously homeless and are transitioning to permanent housing, or are at risk of becoming homeless.
- Requires VA to submit regular reports to Congress on services provided, data on veterans served, and success of the program.

Section 8. Makes the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program through the Department of Labor Permanent and Expand the Reach and Reporting Requirements

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) helps unhoused veterans access long-term, meaningful employment and is key to ending chronic homelessness.

- Makes the program, which has consistently been renewed, permanent.
- Increases program funding to \$60 million to better match usual spending requests upwards of \$55 million and account for the cost of additional reporting, technical assistance, and outreach requirements.
- Expands technical assistance and support to the whole grant and contract process, including during the application period when it is not currently available.
- Directs the Secretary of Labor to emphasize outreach and technical assistance in states that do not currently have any HVRP programs.
- Directs the Attorney General to allow access for HVRP to eligible veterans transitioning out of certain institutions.
- Requires the Secretary of Labor to collect data from the different programs on participants and produce a report to Congress on that data and information on grants not awarded and participants not placed for employment.

Section 9. Creates a Pilot Program for Increasing Public Transportation Connections to Facilities that Serve Veterans

One of the biggest difficulties veterans struggling with housing face is access to transportation, not just to reach VA facilities, but also to reach places of employment, grocery stores, and other resources.

- Requires VA to establish a five-site, five-year pilot program providing grants to states, tribes, counties, and cities to expand, create, or maintain public transportation access at sites that serve veterans.
- Requires VA to collect data from grant recipients and put together a report to Congress on grant recipients, veterans served, and services provided.

Section 10. Creates a Pilot Program for Providing Medical Care to Veterans in Transitional Housing

GPD facilities and other transitional housing services that provide a residence to veterans while they await permanent housing and other services such as meals, employment consultation, etc. frequently do not have the ability to provide services to veterans with extensive medical needs. This is particularly difficult for veterans suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia who need round-the-clock care, but typically have to wait approximately two years for placement in appropriate permanent housing, but have nowhere to stay during that time as GPD facilities do not have the staff to care for them.

- Requires VA to establish a five-site, five-year pilot program through which organizations providing transitional housing to veterans can apply for grants to fund hiring of on-site medical professionals and their supplies.
- Requires VA to collect information from recipients and submit a report to Congress with demographic data on the veterans served and the status of their access to health care and long-term housing.

Section 11. GAO Study on Affordable Housing for Veterans

- Requires the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on availability of affordable housing for veterans and its impact on veterans transitioning out of temporary housing provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Section 12. Updates HUD-VASH Case Management Contracting Requirement

- Requires VA to contract HUD-VASH case management services with entities experienced in providing case management services.