

**Initiative:** Welcome Home Pilot Program in Washington, D.C. Metro area

**Action step:** Elks partner with local VA facilities to end veteran homelessness in Washington, D.C. Metro area.

**Changes anticipated:** Veterans who receive assistance and funding from HUD-VASH will receive support and supplies from Elks Lodges, helping them to establish and sustain their homes and get back on their feet.

**Who will carry it out:** Local Lodges will assist veterans in or near their communities. Lodge Veterans Chairs or VAVS Reps will contact the HUD-VASH facility nearest their Lodge and inquire about veterans entering new homes. (If there is not a HUD-VASH facility near the Lodge, Elks should ask the nearest VA to refer them to local resources/facilities.) Participating Lodges will pledge to assist at least one homeless veteran per year. This pledge consists of two things.

- 1) Lodges will prepare a Welcome Home kit to present to the veteran when they arrive in their new home. Lodges needing assistance in providing beds for homeless veterans will apply to the ENVSC at least **three** weeks prior to the veteran's move-in date. The ENVSC will pay for and ship the bed directly to the home of the veteran on the day the Elks plan to arrive at the veteran's new home. Lodges that wish to help further can help raise funds for security deposits. If a Lodge provides funds for half of the veteran's security deposit, the ENVSC will provide the other half.
- 2) Once a veteran is home, it can be difficult to change habits and transition from a life on the street. Lodges will pledge to follow up with that veteran for one year after their move-in date. Elks will make contact three times each month, one of which includes a social outing (i.e. dinner at the Lodge, a community event, a walk in the park.)

**By when:** This program will exist as long as there are homeless veterans.

**What resources are needed:** Administrative support will be handled by the ENVSC office. ENVSC funding is required to assist with buying beds and matching security deposit grants. Lodges will be responsible for purchasing remaining Welcome Home Kit supplies.

**Communication:** The ENVSC office will need to be in close contact with HUD-VASH facilities, as well as with Lodges participating in the program.

## Promotion to Lodges

The Elks have partnered with the VA and Joining Forces to end veteran homelessness in America. More than ten percent of homeless adults are veterans. 70 percent of the veterans served through the VA have dealt with chronic homelessness and unemployment. As many as 14 percent of veterans served by the VA have families.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has a program specifically targeted toward helping veterans find homes, called HUD-VASH. It's commonly called HUD\_VASH. Read more about it here.)

But they can't do it alone! HUD-VASH can help veterans locate homes and help them pay rent expenses, but that's all. They can't cover supplies, security deposits or utilities. This is where the Elks can lend a hand.

You can start by contacting your local HUD-VASH facility to see if there are any veterans transitioning to new homes. Don't forget about other veterans shelters and transitional homes in your community, too. If there are any veterans who need help, here are three ways you can take action.

1. Most veterans move into their homes with nothing. Help veterans establish their homes by building your own Welcome Home Kit. Generally, this kit would include some small furniture, kitchenware, and cleaning supplies. Items can be used or new or used, donated or purchased. Click here for a suggested list of Welcome Home Kit supplies.

\*If your Lodge has paired with a local HUD-VASH facility and is assembling a Welcome Home Kit for a veteran, we can help with funding! We're able to provide access to beds and bed frames so you can focus on providing the rest of the supplies. Complete this form and submit it to the ENVSC at least three weeks prior to the move-in date. We'll be able to ensure that a bed and frame arrive at the veteran's new home in time for his or her Welcome Home party.

2. Raise or donate funds to pay for a security deposit and to help set up utilities. Hold a fundraiser at the Lodge. Approach local businesses, charities and fraternal organizations for help. If your Lodge is able to raise half of a veteran's security deposit, the ENVSC will provide the second half. Complete this form at least three weeks prior to move-in to apply. Be sure to attach documentation of funds raised.
3. Once a veteran is home, it can be difficult to change habits and transition from a life on the street. Set up a monthly visit or dinner at the Lodge with the veteran, and call them twice a month to see how they're doing. Establishing a home is just the first step. You can welcome veterans home by making them feel part of the Elks family. Visit our Adopt-a-Vet page for more information and suggestions on how your Lodge can provide support and friendship to veterans in need.