



HUD-VASH Exit Study

Final Report



HUD-VASH EXIT STUDY

FINAL REPORT

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DISCLAIMER

The contents of this report do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or the United States Government.

PREFACE

The HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program serves hard-to-house, homeless Veterans and their families with deep housing subsidies and intensive supportive services. HUD-VASH, a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Veterans Affairs, has grown from a small program serving fewer than 2,000 Veterans in 2008 to a major program with the capacity to serve more than 87,000 Veterans in 2017. With 87,864 VASH vouchers in circulation in April 2017, the program contributed substantially to the 47-percent decline in the number of homeless Veterans since 2010.

The HUD-VASH exit study takes a close look at how the HUD-VASH program was implemented in four different sites, focusing most on the 2011-to-2014 period, supplemented with administrative data covering 2008 to 2014. HUD-VASH served more than 7,000 clients during this time at the four sites. Researchers surveyed more than 500 Veterans and conducted in-depth interviews with 110 Veterans to enhance information that could be derived from administrative data. The study analyzes how Veterans moved through the program from homelessness to stable housing and why Veterans exit the program. By better understanding why Veterans leave the program, we can inform and improve efforts to house this population.

The report finds that about one-half of Veterans who exited the program during the observation period simply no longer needed its intensive support, but a substantial minority of exiters would probably benefit from continued case management services and housing assistance—the key program features. This need is especially strong among Veterans who exit the program before accessing housing. The report describes program successes and offers concrete recommendations for program improvement. In particular, it describes promising practices for serving the Veterans with the greatest barriers to housing stability. This careful analysis of the characteristics of exiters from the program should inspire current and future efforts to better address the needs of the homeless veteran population.

MESSAGE FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

In 2010, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) presented the White House and Congress with *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, which represented the collaborative effort of 19 federal agencies. A primary goal of this plan was to prevent and end Veteran homelessness. Since then, the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness has decreased 47 percent, due in large part to a key collaboration between the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (VA).

HUD and VA collaborated on a number of significant efforts to address Veteran homelessness by providing homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance through the Veterans Homelessness Prevention Demonstration Program, advocating for community efforts to end Veteran homelessness through the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, and permanently housing Veterans through the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. HUD-VASH is one of the most effective tools for ending Veteran homelessness.

HUD-VASH is jointly funded and implemented by HUD and VA. HUD provides a permanent housing subsidy through the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program and VA provides case management and other supportive services to assist formerly homeless Veterans in accessing and maintaining housing. Although the program was originally established in 1992, since the release of *Opening Doors* the number of HUD-VASH vouchers has increased more than 60 percent, and, as of FY 2016, 85,097 vouchers are available across the country to house formerly homeless Veterans, some who go on to live independently.

HUD and VA commissioned this study to learn more about how and why Veterans exit the HUD-VASH program, the role that HUD and VA resources play in Veterans' abilities to access and maintain housing with a HUD-VASH voucher, and facilitators and barriers to successful collaboration between HUD and VA in the administration of the program. Exploring multiple perspectives—Veterans and staff from both HUD and VA—and a wide array of data, this study found that HUD-VASH is successful at retaining Veterans in housing and that those who exit the program often do so because they accomplished their goals and rarely return to VA homeless programs. The study also found that the committed partnership between HUD and VA contributed to more streamlined internal processes and flexible program requirements, contributing to Veterans' rapid access to housing and long-term housing stability.

This project underscores the importance of interagency collaboration and validates much of our joint efforts during these past several years.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH PURPOSE

Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness was released in 2010. This plan included ending Veteran homelessness as one of its top priorities. In fact, homelessness among Veterans declined by nearly 47 percent, from 74,087 in 2010 to 39,471 in 2016. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)–U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program played a key role in this achievement. HUD-VASH provides permanent supportive housing (PSH) to homeless Veterans. To qualify for HUD-VASH, Veterans must be eligible for VA health care and meet the homeless definition established by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.¹ The PSH component links subsidized housing with supportive services such as mental and behavioral health care.

HUD and the VA jointly implement the HUD-VASH program. VA clinicians provide case management to Veterans and refer Veterans to the partner public housing authority for housing. The housing authority issues Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) to HUD-VASH program participants to lease rental units within the private market. In addition, a small number of HUD-VASH participants live in project-based PSH. The HCV subsidizes the portion of rent that exceeds 30 percent of a Veteran's income.

Congress expanded the HUD-VASH program significantly in 2008, with \$635,000,000 in new vouchers funded between fiscal years 2008 and 2016. With this support, HUD and VA transformed HUD-VASH from a small program serving fewer than 2,000 Veterans into a major program with the capacity to serve more than 87,000 Veterans in 2016. As part of the effort to improve program effectiveness, HUD and VA initiated the HUD-VASH exit study in 2012 to develop a better understanding of how and why Veterans exit the program.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study addressed a series of research questions at the participant level:

- Is HUD-VASH successful and what are the facilitators of success?
- What are the reasons that Veterans exit the HUD-VASH program, and do Veterans who exit before leasing up have different reasons than Veterans who exit after leasing up?
- What Veteran characteristics or program antecedents (for example, housing stability, frequency of supportive services, mental health status, and substance use) predict whether Veterans exit the program, the type of exit, and length of stay in the program?
- What are Veterans' patterns of VA medical, mental or behavioral health, and homeless services use before, during, and after participation in the HUD-VASH program?
- What are common barriers that prevent Veterans from using HUD-VASH vouchers to obtain housing or that make remaining in permanent housing difficult?

¹ Pub. L. 100-77, July 22, 1987.

The study also addressed program-level questions regarding implementation and collaboration:

- What community factors affect the success of local housing authorities and VA medical centers in administering the program?
- How do HUD and VA work together to implement HUD-VASH at the community level?
- To answer the research questions, the VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans studied HUD-VASH programs in four U.S. cities: Houston, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Palo Alto, California; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As shown in summary exhibit 1, the research team collected and analyzed administrative data on 7,383 Veterans, surveyed 508 Veterans, and conducted indepth, qualitative interviews with 110 Veterans. Data were complemented by site visits and interviews with program staff.

Summary Exhibit 1. Veteran Data Sources and Sample Sizes

	Stayers	Leased-Up Exiters	Nonleased Exiters	Total N
VA administrative data	2,788 (38%)	3,088 (42%)	1,507 (20%)	7,383
Survey data	370 (73%)	80 (16%)	58 (11%)	508
Qualitative interviews	56 (51%)	28 (25%)	26 (24%)	110

VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

The administrative data gathered from VA medical records, as well as the VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System (HOMES), included information such as demographics, diagnoses and frequency of VA healthcare visits, case management, HUD-VASH program enrollment start and exit dates, and reasons for exiting HUD-VASH case management recorded by case managers. The research team used administrative data to describe Veterans’ characteristics, their paths through the program, and use of VA services. The researchers analyzed the data to identify types of exiters, factors predicting exit, and profiles of exiters. Administrative data also enabled researchers to identify potential respondents for the study’s survey and open-ended qualitative interviews.

A survey of 508 Veterans, conducted either in person or by telephone, and indepth interviews with 110 Veterans contextualized the findings from VA administrative data. Researchers examined the following themes in the survey questions:

- Housing and homelessness history.
- Experiences with the HUD-VASH housing process.
- Housing satisfaction.
- Relationships with case managers.
- Medical and mental health conditions.
- Substance use status.
- Reasons for program exit.

Researchers also gathered program-level information through qualitative interviews with local housing authority staff and VA case managers.

To determine why Veterans exit the HUD-VASH program, the study examined three categories of program participants:

1. Stayers—Veterans who obtained a lease with a HUD-VASH voucher and remained in the housing unit with the voucher for 600 days or longer and had not exited the program at the time of selection into the study.
2. Leased-up exiters—Veterans who exited HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit.
3. Nonleased exiters—Veterans who exited HUD-VASH after obtaining a voucher but before leasing a housing unit.

Exit from the HUD-VASH program was defined as exit from VA case management as recorded by case managers in the VA administrative data.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Successes of HUD-VASH

A major success of the HUD-VASH program was that among both stayers and leased-up exiters, 87 percent remained in the program for at least 1 year and 60 percent for at least 2 years. Of those who exited, nearly 93 percent of leased-up exiters and 90 percent of nonleased exiters did not return to VA homeless programs during the observation period.

Veteran Respondents. | Most of Veteran survey respondents indicated that HUD-VASH met their needs (96 percent of stayers, 90 percent of leased-up exiters, and 88 percent of nonleased exiters). Furthermore, during the qualitative interviews, Veterans indicated that maintaining a relationship with VA case managers was important and that VA peer support specialists provided valuable support from someone who shared their experience. As indicated by Veterans, the following facilitated successful outcomes in the HUD-VASH program:

- Cooperative landlords who waived screening processes or application fees.
- Move-in assistance.
- Quick move-in processes.
- Supportive VA case managers.
- Ability to meet requirements imposed by the HUD-VASH program and property owners.
- Lists of available housing.

Program Staff. | At the program level, relationships with community partners and the ability to connect Veterans to community resources contributed to successful outcomes. The following common themes and activities, as articulated by program staff, contribute to the program's success:

- Collaboration with community partners to identify Veterans in need of assistance.
- Connecting Veterans to community resources.
- HUD-VASH boot camps as workshops to learn how to better respond to Veterans' needs.

- Program flexibility.
- Reliance on VA specialists for employment and peer support.
- Building trust between Veterans and program staff.
- Promoting Veteran independence so that Veterans can rebuild rental and credit history.

Reasons for Exiting HUD-VASH

Veteran Respondents (Leased-Up Exiters and Nonleased Exiters). | Among the leased-up exiters interviewed (N=74), the most common reason for exiting the program was an increase in income—a positive outcome for 27 percent of leased-up exiters. Another 11 percent indicated they left to move in with family or friends. The remaining 62 percent of leased-up exiters indicated reasons for exit such as worsening medical or mental health, difficulty paying rent, eviction, and dissatisfaction with the neighborhood.

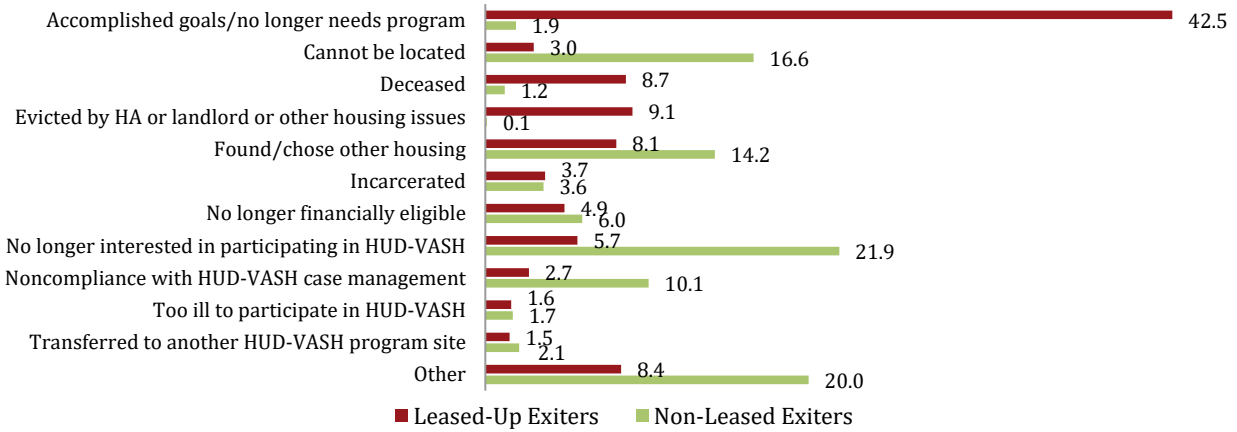
Nonleased exiters (N=53) often indicated that difficulty in finding housing was the main reason for exiting the program prior to moving into an apartment. Of nonleased exiters, 23 percent indicated that having the voucher revoked was the main reason for their exit, and 21 percent reported difficulty with housing, citing examples such as dissatisfaction with available apartments, inability to find an apartment to rent with the voucher, and insufficient funds to pay for the security deposit or furniture. Most of the remaining nonleased exiters indicated reasons for exit such as getting an offer to move in with family or friends, worsening medical or mental health, difficulty with HUD-VASH case management, and legal trouble; 13 percent indicated exiting for the positive reasons of increased income and improved health.

Program Staff. | Staff from local housing authorities and VA case management teams described their perspectives as to why leased-up and nonleased exiters left the program. The main reasons identified by program staff are as follows:

- Incarceration.
- Increase in income, which can make Veterans ineligible for the program.
- Lease or program violations.
- Loss of contact.
- Lack of motivation to complete the process required to access housing.
- Withdrawal because Veterans may no longer need case management.

Case Managers. | When a Veteran exits HUD-VASH, VA case managers record in HOMES 1 of the 12 reasons listed in summary exhibit 2 to indicate why the Veteran ended his or her involvement in HUD-VASH case management. According to VA case managers, the most common reason for exit among leased-up exiters is that the Veteran accomplished his or her goals or obtained access to services and no longer needed the program. Eviction or selecting other housing were also identified frequently, although fewer than 1 in 10 leased-up exiters were considered to have left the program for either of those reasons. Nonleased exiters were more evenly split across exit categories. VA case managers indicated that a common reason for nonleased exiters to leave the program was that they were no longer interested in participating, followed by the case manager being unable to locate the Veteran or the Veteran selecting other housing.

Summary Exhibit 2. Reasons for Exits Reported by VA Case Managers, Percent of HUD-VASH Participants



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing.

Note: N = 4,925, including 3,070 leased-up exiters and 1,855 nonleased exiters.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Veterans’ Characteristics

About 90 percent of Veterans who participated in HUD-VASH programs at each of the study sites were men, regardless of the study group. Other characteristics varied among the study groups. Most stayers and leased-up exiters identified as Black and non-Hispanic, whereas most nonleased exiters identified as White and non-Hispanic.

Leased-up exiters were more likely than others to have a medical or mental or behavioral health condition, and nearly one-half of them received HUD-VASH vouchers while living in a supportive environment. Before program entry, leased-up exiters used emergency and acute care more frequently than stayers, but use declined after program entry. HUD-VASH participants with a service-connected disability² were 37 percent more likely to leave HUD-VASH after obtaining housing, perhaps indicating that they had sufficient income to live independently.

Compared with Veterans who accessed HUD-VASH housing, nonleased exiters tended to have deployed during the period after September 11, 2001, serving in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, or New Dawn. Nearly one-third of nonleased exiters received vouchers at a time when they were literally homeless. They received less frequent VA case management between referral to the housing authority and voucher receipt and reported finding the housing process more difficult. Nonleased exiters were the most likely to report poor health during their time in the program and used emergency and acute care more frequently both before and after entry than did Veterans who moved into housing. Among exiters, Veterans with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder were more likely to exit before moving into housing.

² A disability incurred during military service is termed a *service-connected* disability and may entitle a Veteran to disability compensation, a monetary benefit paid to Veterans who the VA determines to be disabled by an injury or illness incurred or aggravated during active military service.

Researchers used demographic, health, and exit data about Veterans to conduct a series of latent class analyses that grouped study sample members into subgroups. The latent class analyses included variables that describe Veterans’ demographic and clinical characteristics and case managers’ characterizations of reasons for exit. Results of these analyses describe the heterogeneity among exiters. Summary exhibits 3 and 4 describe the subgroups of leased and nonleased exiters, arranged in order from most to least successful exits. Subgroups with most of the Veterans exiting the program because they had accomplished their goals or become financially ineligible are considered more successful than subgroups for whom negative exit reasons such as eviction or incarceration are more common.

Summary exhibit 3 describes five classes of leased-up exiters. This analysis suggests that about one-half of leased-up exiters left the program for positive reasons, based on case managers’ characterization of reasons for exit. The first three classes can be considered successful, because most Veterans left HUD-VASH for reasons such as accomplishing goals or making too much money to qualify for the program. The smallest and least successful class had high needs with little income and used acute or intensive services more frequently. This class tended to exit the program for reasons such as noncompliance or incarceration.

Summary Exhibit 3. Profiles of Leased-Up Exiters, HUD-VASH Participants

	Demographics	Clinical Characteristics	Reasons for Exit
Class 1 (20.9%)	Younger female, SC disability	Low rates of chronic medical and behavioral health conditions.	Accomplished goals Found other housing Financially ineligible
Class 2 (16.4%)	Older male, no SC disability	Low rates of chronic medical and behavioral health conditions.	Accomplished goals
Class 3 (16.6%)	Middle-aged male and female, SC disability	High rates of behavioral health conditions or substance abuse problems; chronic medical conditions.	Accomplished goals Financially ineligible
Class 4 (32.2%)	Older male, no SC disability	Low rates of chronic medical and behavioral health conditions.	Accomplished goals Loss of contact with VA Incarceration Noncompliance Eviction
Class 5 (13.9%)	Older male, no SC disability	High rates of chronic medical and behavioral health conditions; inpatient care.	Loss of contact with VA Incarceration Noncompliance Eviction

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. SC = Service-connected.

Note: N = 2,959.

As shown in summary exhibit 4, researchers identified three profiles of nonleased exiters. About one-fourth of nonleased exiters were younger, female Veterans who left the program for positive reasons. Nonleased exiters in class 3 had high rates of medical, mental, and substance use conditions and typically left the program due to illness or incarceration.

Summary Exhibit 4. Profiles of Nonleased Exiters, HUD-VASH Participants

	Demographics	Clinical Characteristics	Reasons for Exit
Class 1 (25.2%)	Younger female, SC disability	Few medical, mental and behavioral health, or substance abuse problems.	Found housing elsewhere Were no longer interested in HUD-VASH
Class 2 (44.9%)	Older male, no SC disability	Some medical problems, but few mental and behavioral health or substance abuse problems.	Typically did not accomplish goals
Class 3 (29.9%)	Younger to middle-aged male, no SC disability or more than 50% disability	High rates of medical, mental and behavioral health, or substance abuse problems. Use of inpatient care prior to exit.	Loss of contact with VA Illness Incarceration

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. SC = Service-connected.

Note: N = 1,307.

Veterans’ Patterns of VA Services Use

The research team examined Veterans’ patterns of use of VA medical and mental health services before entry into the program and, if applicable, after exit from the program. Across all study groups, administrative records demonstrated that the frequency of medical, mental or behavioral health, and substance use visits, and of inpatient stays of any kind, declined after admission to the HUD-VASH program. Nonleased exiters received more healthcare services than leased-up exiters in the 90 days before exit and in the 180 days after exit, although Veterans’ use of inpatient and emergency care either remained flat or declined for both groups of exiters after exit.

Common Barriers To Obtaining Housing

Veteran Respondents. | Qualitative interview respondents indicated critical barriers to accessing HUD-VASH housing. Some Veterans indicated that case managers were impersonal, overworked, and held irregular meetings that were insufficient to forge a supportive relationship. Several respondents indicated that they experienced discrimination from property owners, who in some instances charged higher amounts for security deposits or failed to return phone calls. Nonleased exiters tended to find the HUD-VASH housing process to be more difficult than did stayers and leased-up exiters. Common challenges articulated by Veterans during qualitative interviews included:

- Housing located in undesirable, high-crime neighborhoods.
- Limited accessible housing.
- Limited funds for move-in.
- Conflicts with property owners, who were slow with paperwork or had issues coordinating rent and using HUD-VASH vouchers.
- Unsuitable housing (for example, plumbing and electrical issues and bug infestations).
- Unwillingness of landlords to rent to Veterans with criminal backgrounds.
- Limited transportation resources for Veterans to visit housing units of interest.

- Lengthy apartment inspection process.
- Medical and mental health conditions that hindered apartment searches.

Program Staff. | Program staff responses about barriers to obtaining housing overlapped with Veterans' responses in the areas of affording move-in costs; Veteran background characteristics such as poor credit, past evictions, or criminal background; and medical and mental health conditions. Program staff also added that Veteran readiness in transitioning from homelessness to new housing units was a barrier to obtaining housing.

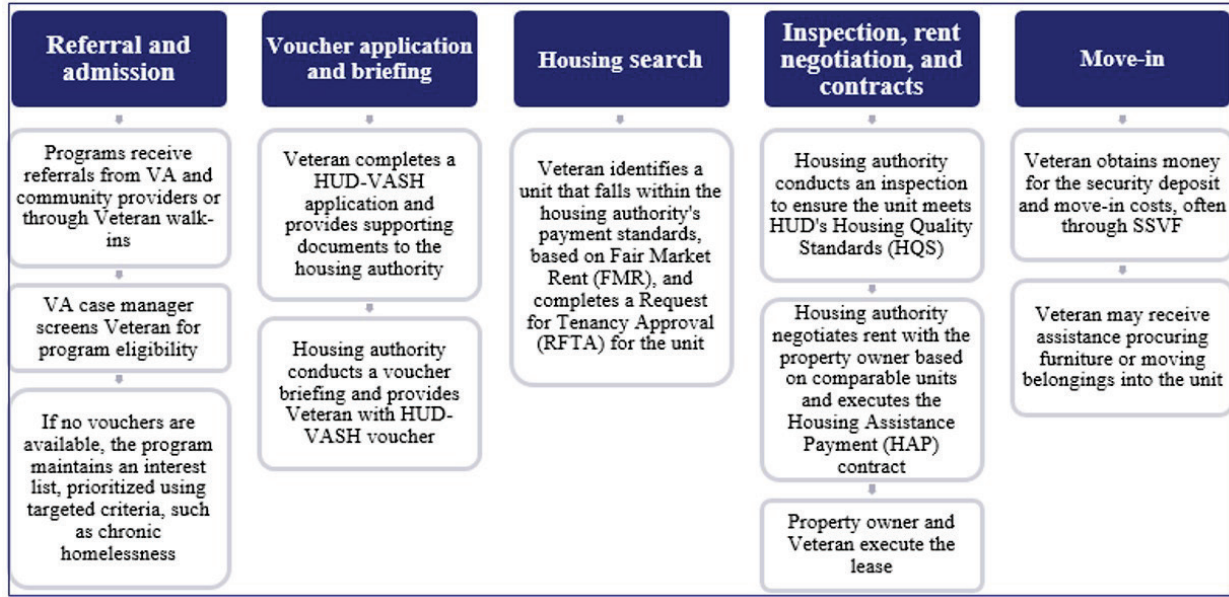
Effect of Community Factors on the Success of HUD-VASH

Qualitative interviews with local housing authority and case management staff revealed a variety of resources unique to the study sites that contributed to the local success of the program. For example, VA case management in Los Angeles includes a nurse who assists Veterans with ongoing medical issues, sometimes directly within Veterans' homes. Life skills groups in Palo Alto teach Veterans the tools to get and stay housed. The Philadelphia VA team indicated that housing, peer support, and substance use disorder specialists, as well as resources to assist Veterans interested in furthering education or finding employment and transitioning out of HUD-VASH, were vital to their team. The Houston Housing Authority has a waiver enabling the housing authority to pay up to 110 percent of the Fair Market Rent for HUD-VASH participants in high-opportunity areas, enabling Veterans to move to areas with higher performing schools and more community resources.

HUD and VA Collaboration

The process for moving a Veteran into HUD-VASH housing is depicted in summary exhibit 5. Although some components of the HUD-VASH program are standardized across the country, flexibility exists in how the local housing authorities and VA case management teams collaborate to fulfill requirements. In communities with multiple housing authorities the steps may differ in number or execution across agencies. Program staff identified elements of HUD and VA collaboration that facilitate the program, including co-location of housing authority and VA case management, HUD-VASH boot camps, and streamlining the application process. For example, VA case managers are collocated with the Harris County Housing Authority in Houston; the teams share a vision and collaborate to determine how best to serve Veterans. The Los Angeles city and county housing authorities created a single, uniform HUD-VASH application that makes paperwork easier for VA staff. VA staff complete the voucher application for the Housing Authority of the County of Monterey, which shortens turnaround time.

Summary Exhibit 5. Overview of HUD-VASH Processes



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing. SSVF = Supportive Services for Veteran Families.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the amount of data collected in this study, several limitations exist:

- Due to data limitations, the research team was unable to assess other characteristics of Veterans' history that would increase understanding of housing stability such as the chronicity of homelessness, incarceration, or family composition.
- The difficulty of recalling an event in the past, as well as feeling the need to provide a favorable answer (social desirability bias), may have influenced Veterans' responses.
- The results of the study do not indicate whether Veterans who exited case management continued to receive HUD housing assistance.³

Using multiple sites for primary data collection also has some limitations:

- Although the research team conducted a number of quality assurance activities, the study methodology may have been carried out inconsistently across sites.
- Each site has different geographies and housing markets, making some of the findings more context specific rather than generalizable.

³ In-house analysis conducted in December 2016 by HUD indicates that, among Veterans who exited HUD-VASH case management, about two-thirds probably also had exited housing assistance much earlier or around the same time.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

The HUD-VASH program demonstrated high rates of retention and low rates of returns to VA homeless programs. The program fulfills its purpose in serving the needs of Veterans with medical conditions, mental health conditions, or a history of substance use. Based on innovations that the research team observed in practice, the study suggests that to maintain Veterans' long-term housing stability, HUD and VA should:

- Maintain continuity of care through a team approach.
- Increase assistance during the housing search.
- Provide assistance during the transition to independent housing.
- Explore additional opportunities for project-basing HUD-VASH vouchers to streamline the provision of more intensive support and services.
- Evaluate Veterans' needs and housing satisfaction more regularly using more accurate metrics.

To mitigate the difficulty in affording move-in costs, HUD-VASH should coordinate with Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) programs and other community organizations to assist with the financial aspect of the housing process. SSVF could also be useful in transitioning Veterans from receiving a HUD-VASH subsidy to paying their full market-rate rent through the use of small subsidies. Additionally, other programs need to be identified to assist Veterans with utility bills.

As the HUD-VASH study was being completed, many of these recommendations were being employed. For instance, VA implemented a team-based approach to case management, and in each of the past 3 years, HUD successfully held competitions for HUD-VASH project-based vouchers.

The study recommends that future efforts to improve the program include a focus on assessing Veterans more regularly throughout program admission and the housing process, while in housing, and on exiting the HUD-VASH program. The goal would be to ensure that Veterans receive the level of assistance they need to maintain housing stability. Interventions with varying levels of intensity should be considered. Veterans who do not need the full complement of HUD-VASH services may benefit from lower intensity intervention, including shallow subsidies for Veterans transitioning out of the program. Veterans transitioning from a literally homeless situation may require more intensive services for a longer period of time. More in-depth assessment of reasons for exiting HUD-VASH would provide a deeper understanding of what constitutes success and Veterans' views on what is needed to attain success.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Preventing and ending homelessness among Veterans is a national priority supported by the White House and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH, 2010). Both the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are committed to using evidence-based approaches to address Veteran homelessness. An example of the collaboration between these two agencies is the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, which has been credited with reducing unsheltered homelessness among Veterans (USICH, 2014).

HUD-VASH is a vital tool that ends homelessness among Veterans by providing permanent supportive housing (PSH)—housing subsidies provided by HUD combined with supportive services provided by VA—specifically for Veterans and with a focus on those experiencing chronic homelessness. To understand how HUD-VASH contributes to the decline in Veteran homelessness and to inform practice and policy responses, additional information is needed, such as how effective the program is at assisting formerly homeless Veterans to access and maintain housing, whether Veterans who leave the program sustain their housing stability, and reasons why Veterans leave the program.

Previous research on PSH has examined access to housing, the process of attaining a housing unit, and housing retention. Research related to residents' exits from PSH has primarily focused on types of program exits and predicting circumstances of exit and length of stay. Building on this work, this study offers a comprehensive examination of HUD-VASH program processes, services, and program exits—defined as exits from HUD-VASH case management—and is the first study to examine exits that occur both before and after accessing HUD-VASH subsidized housing. Extensive quantitative analysis of VA administrative data is contextualized by survey and interview data from Veterans, housing authority staff, and VA case managers.

BACKGROUND

Approximately 48,000 Veterans were homeless on one night in January 2015; about 64 percent were staying at an emergency shelter or transitional housing, and the remainders were living in an unsheltered situation (HUD, 2015a). During federal fiscal year (FFY) 2014, approximately 132,000 Veterans accessed emergency homeless shelters or transitional housing (HUD, 2015b). Although the size of the homeless Veteran population has gradually declined—35 percent between 2010 and 2015—several studies have found that Veterans' risk of homelessness is at least double that of a comparable population of non-Veterans (Fargo et al., 2012; HUD, 2015a; HUD and VA, 2011). To address the disproportionately high rates of homelessness among Veterans, VA developed a strategy that includes ending chronic homelessness among Veterans through HUD-VASH.

The following sections describe the concept of PSH, how it has been operationalized at VA medical centers (VAMCs), and what is known about exits from PSH, including HUD-VASH.

Permanent Supportive Housing

PSH, which combines subsidized housing with wraparound supportive services, is the preferred intervention for addressing chronic homelessness (HUD, 2013). This intervention often is indicated for individuals who are experiencing a chronic condition, particularly serious mental illness and substance use disorders (SUDs), that may be associated with an increased risk of housing instability (Caton, Wilkins, and Anderson, 2007) and asserts that they should live in “normal” housing regardless of their level of functioning (Blanch, Carling, and Ridgway, 1988). The general tenets of PSH dictate that housing is permanent and based on the individual’s preference and that adequate supportive services are available to assist those individuals in maintaining housing stability (Carling, 1990).

PSH is an evidence-based practice that improves outcomes such as housing stability among persons with serious mental illness and decreases unnecessary use of acute care and institutional services (Culhane, Metraux, and Hadley, 2002; Rog, 2004). Retention rates in PSH are as high as 85 percent during the first year, and studies have found that up to one-half of PSH residents remain in program housing for 3 to 5 years (Caton, Wilkins, and Anderson, 2007).

HUD-VASH

HUD-VASH, jointly funded and implemented by HUD and VA, comprises a permanent housing subsidy provided through HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program and case management provided by VA clinicians. To be eligible for HUD-VASH, Veterans must be eligible for VA health care and be considered homeless, as defined by the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act and amended by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009.⁴ Specifically, HUD-VASH is intended to serve chronically homeless Veterans (i.e., Veterans who have experienced long-term or repeated homelessness), with the goal of helping them access and maintain stable housing.

Through its national HCV program, HUD provides rental assistance for units in the private rental market through housing vouchers that are administered by local public housing authorities. Participants pay a portion of their monthly income toward the rent, with the remaining portion subsidized by the voucher. VA serves Veterans participating in HUD-VASH by providing case management and other supportive services to assist Veterans with the housing search and move-in processes and connecting them with medical, mental health, and substance use services either at local VA facilities or from community-based providers. The goal of case management is to connect Veterans with services they need to access and maintain housing stability. Chapter 4 includes more detailed information on HUD-VASH processes; chapters 5 and 6 provide further information on housing and case management.

⁴To be eligible for VA health care, Veterans must have served in active duty and had an other-than-dishonorable discharge. Although eligibility is not restricted to chronically homeless Veterans, HUD-VASH is prioritized for those with the greatest needs. HEARTH defines an individual or family as chronically homeless if they reside in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter; have been homeless for at least 1 year or on 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years; and have an adult head of household with a substance abuse disorder, mental illness, developmental disability, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability (HUD, 2016b).

HUD and VA originally established HUD-VASH in 1992 with approximately 1,700 vouchers. The size of the program increased significantly in 2008 with an allotment of 10,000 vouchers; as of FFY 2015, nearly 79,000 HUD-VASH vouchers are in use across the country (HUD, 2016a). Local public housing authorities receive HUD-VASH vouchers based on a set of community characteristics: the number of Veterans who are homeless on one day in January based on local point-in-time (PIT) counts; the frequency of contacts that the VAMC has with Veterans experiencing homelessness; and how well the local housing authorities and VAMCs are performing in terms of housing Veterans. Based on those data, the agencies select communities with the greatest need; HUD identifies one or more corresponding housing authorities to administer the vouchers, and VA identifies VAMCs to provide supportive services, with mutual agreements between the agencies in place regarding the number of vouchers to be used in each community (HUD, 2016a). Although the HUD-VASH program includes national requirements regarding eligibility and minimum services provision for Veterans, each local program operates differently.

During FFY 2013, VA shifted its policy regarding the implementation and administration of HUD-VASH to be consistent with a Housing First approach. A traditional model of PSH places requirements—such as accepting treatment for mental health or substance use issues or agreeing to a representative payee to manage their income—on individuals before they can access permanent housing. Housing First is distinguished from this model because it provides individuals access to housing with no further requirements, based on the rationale that once an individual has attained housing stability, she or he is more likely to engage in services (Tsemberis, 2010). This study was conducted during HUD-VASH’s transition to Housing First; therefore, each program studied was in a different stage of adopting Housing First principles.

Although the Housing First approach does not require individuals to participate in services, HUD-VASH regulations require that the program serve Veterans who need support to obtain and maintain housing; Veterans typically have medical, mental health, or substance use disorders and an extensive history of homelessness. Regulations also require that participating Veterans communicate with VA case managers or VA case management teams at least monthly.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

PSH generally—and HUD-VASH specifically—is intended to be permanent housing. Given that aim, previous research has attempted to address why individuals and households participating in PSH exit those programs. Those studies have looked at households’ access to housing, the process of attaining a housing unit, housing retention, and types of program exit.

Housing Process

Two studies considered the relationship between the housing process—from receiving a referral to a PSH program to attaining permanent housing—and households’ housing-related outcomes. The first study used data from the initial phase of the HUD-VASH program (1991–1999) and found that Veterans’ entry into the program (that is, receiving a referral to be considered for the program) was more likely if the Veteran had a history of drug or alcohol use and had participated in a VA treatment program; however, those Veterans who reported recent substance use were less likely to receive a referral. This study also sought to identify conditions and characteristics associated with attaining a voucher and accessing permanent housing. Only one demographic characteristic, female gender, was consistently associated with successful progress through the

program. Veterans affiliated with more mature programs had greater success obtaining vouchers, and Veterans accompanied by VA case managers during the housing search were more likely to attain housing (Kaspro et al., 2000).

A second study randomly assigned individuals with serious mental illness who were experiencing homelessness to one of four groups: HCV plus traditional case management, HCV plus more intensive case management services, traditional case management only, or intensive case management only. This study assessed whether access to a housing voucher or supportive services, demographics, and clinical characteristics were associated with individuals' ability to attain housing. Those individuals who were assigned an HCV—regardless of level of case management intensity—were approximately 20 percent more likely to achieve some type of consistent housing and almost five times more likely to obtain independent permanent housing than those who did not receive a voucher (Hurlburt, Hough, and Wood, 1996).

Housing Retention

Approximately 85 percent of individuals living in PSH retain their housing for at least 1 year (Caton, Wilkins, and Anderson, 2007). An early study of HUD-VASH found that the average length of stay in the program was 15 months, that approximately one-half of Veterans remained in HUD-VASH housing for at least 1 year, and approximately two-thirds of Veterans who left the program moved into independent housing (Mares, Kaspro, and Rosenheck). A later study found that 93 percent of a sample of Veterans remained in stable HUD-VASH housing 12 months following move-in (Montgomery et al., 2013). Several studies have identified characteristics of households and programs that contribute to long-term housing retention.

Kaspro and colleagues (2000) found that Veterans were more likely to remain housed for 1 year if VA case managers helped them obtain Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. Another study using HUD-VASH data found that Veterans with more medical problems experienced longer lengths of stay in housing (Mares, Kaspro, and Rosenheck, 2004). Female gender and shorter histories of homelessness have been associated with longer-term housing stability (Hurlburt, Hough, and Wood, 1996; Pearson, Montgomery, and Locke, 2009), whereas a report of drug and alcohol problems increased an individual's probability of unstable housing by a factor of more than two (Goldfinger et al., 1999; Hurlburt, Hough, and Wood, 1996). Researchers also have observed that individuals identifying as Black were more likely to exit PSH within 12 months of entry (Pearson, Montgomery, and Locke, 2009; Wong et al., 2008) and that a positive relationship exists between education and housing retention (Pearson, Montgomery, and Locke, 2009).

At the nexus of person- and program-level characteristics, one study determined that a higher proportion of individuals who stay in PSH use outpatient behavioral health services compared with those who leave PSH. Alternatively, individuals who leave PSH use a higher proportion of inpatient services during their time in PSH compared with those who stay in PSH (Wong et al., 2008).

Program-level characteristics associated with long-term housing retention have been found to account for more of the variation in the housing outcomes than do client characteristics (Harkness, Newman, and Salkever, 2004; Mares, Kaspro, and Rosenheck, 2004). A specific program characteristic that enhances housing retention is access to rental subsidies (Mares, Kaspro, and Rosenheck, 2004), including HCVs (Hurlburt, Hough, and Wood, 1996).

Individuals in cluster-site housing stay for shorter periods of time than individuals in scattered-site housing (Wong et al., 2008), and poor building quality is also associated with shorter stays (Harkness, Newman, and Salkever, 2004).

Types of Exit

Several studies related to PSH and housing stability have explored exit dispositions among individuals who leave the programs. Wong and colleagues (2006) studied differences—demographic and diagnostic factors, history of homeless shelter use, characteristics of service use, and program features—between individuals who stayed in PSH and three categories of exits: (1) positive versus nonpositive exits; (2) voluntary versus involuntary exits, with voluntary exits being further categorized into opportunity seekers and situational exiters; and (3) exits to independent housing versus nonindependent housing. They identified one-third of their study sample as positive exiters who exited the program to live in an independent setting without services and two-thirds as nonpositive exiters who returned to homelessness or entered a residential or institutional setting. Compared with positive exiters, nonpositive exiters reported a higher level of services use, particularly acute services (for example, emergency department, inpatient psychiatric treatment), during and following their tenure in PSH.

Individuals who made the choice to leave PSH were considered voluntary exiters and constituted approximately two-thirds of the sample, whereas individuals who were asked to leave PSH as a result of rule violations or inability to sustain independent housing constituted approximately one-third of the sample. Among voluntary exiters, the group of opportunity seekers often “graduated” from the program after exhibiting the ability to live independently. On the other hand, situational exiters elected to leave the program to address “personal, housing, and support situations” (p. xiv) or because of changes in functioning or housing preference. Common reasons for exiting PSH among involuntary leavers were that they were asked to leave by the program, were actively abusing substances, became ill, or were hospitalized; in contrast, voluntary exiters moved to more desirable housing (Wong et al., 2006). The third category of leavers that Wong and colleagues (2006) identified was based on the exiters’ post-PSH living situation; approximately one-third were independent-housing exiters, one-third were nonindependent housing exiters, and the remaining one-third exited to unknown locations. As expected, involuntary exiters were more likely to leave for nonindependent housing, whereas voluntary exiters were more likely to leave for independent housing.

Another study included death, the need for more intensive care, incarceration, and eviction related to violence as involuntary reasons for exit. Voluntary reasons included refusing to obtain identification needed to secure benefits and being a wanderer (Pearson, Montgomery, and Locke, 2009). A study using HUD-VASH data similarly characterized Veterans’ exit type as either mutually agreed on (both Veteran and VA case manager decided that VA case management was no longer necessary) or premature (Veterans left under other circumstances or were asked to leave). During the study period, one-half of the Veterans who exited the program did so under mutual agreement; 20 percent exited prematurely because of rule violations, most frequently related to substance use; and the remaining Veterans initiated their own exit. Although Veterans who waited longer for housing were more likely to exit prematurely and to have poor housing and employment outcomes, there was a positive association between VA case management visits and mutually agreed-on exits as well as housing and employment outcomes (Mares, Kaspro, and Rosenheck, 2004).

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

This study intends to provide a better understanding of how and why Veterans exit the HUD-VASH program. This study identified facilitators and barriers to program engagement, housing processes, and VA case management; described participants' use of VA services before, during, and after program participation; explored the timing and reasons for program exits; and assessed collaborative efforts between HUD and VA in the administration of four local HUD-VASH programs.

The study addressed the following research questions at the Veteran level:

- What are common barriers that prevent Veterans from using HUD-VASH vouchers to obtain housing or that make remaining in permanent housing difficult?
- What are the reasons that Veterans exit the HUD-VASH program?
- What different types of exits are there, and do reasons for exit differ across exit types?
- What Veteran characteristics or program antecedents (for example, housing stability, frequency of supportive services, mental health status, substance use) predict whether Veterans exit the program, the type of exit, and length of stay in the program?
- What are Veterans' patterns of VA medical, mental or behavioral health, and homeless services use before, during, and after participation in the HUD-VASH program,?
- The study also considered program-level questions regarding implementation and collaboration:
 - What community factors impact the success of local housing authorities and VAMCs in administering the program?
 - How do HUD and VA work together to implement HUD-VASH at the community level?

To address those research questions, the VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV) coordinated a multisite research study conducted through four HUD-VASH programs: Houston, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Palo Alto, California; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Data were collected on Veterans who were currently in the HUD-VASH program and had been for 2 years or more, Veterans who exited the program after obtaining permanent housing using a HUD-VASH voucher, and Veterans who exited the program after receiving a voucher but before attaining permanent housing.

Existing VA medical record and homeless system data for HUD-VASH participants at each site allowed the research team to assess Veterans' background characteristics and services use during their participation in HUD-VASH and explore the relationship between clinical characteristics and program exits. Research staff also conducted closed- and open-ended interviews with a subsample of HUD-VASH participants. During those interviews, Veterans provided information about their personal characteristics, perceptions of the HUD-VASH housing process from admission to the program to moving into housing, satisfaction with their housing (if housed), and their relationship with their VA case managers.

In addition, research staff from the NCHAV visited local HUD-VASH housing authorities and VA case management teams at each of the study sites to develop comprehensive descriptions of those sites and to contextualize Veteran-level findings. Program-level information also highlights

coordination and collaboration between HUD and VA as well as best practices across the sites, common facilitators and barriers to engaging and retaining Veterans in the program, and frequent reasons why Veterans exit the program.

THIS REPORT

This report presents findings about Veterans and local HUD-VASH programs. Following an overview of the methods employed during this study, this report describes HUD-VASH participants who met the study criteria at each of the study sites, including Veterans' demographic and clinical characteristics. The report then summarizes and compares features of the HUD-VASH study sites, including an overview of the process from program engagement to housing and retaining a Veteran in the program. Next, the report describes Veterans' experiences in the HUD-VASH program; experiences with VA case management; VA services use before, during, and after program enrollment; and why Veterans exited the program. Finally, the report outlines facilitators and barriers to accessing and sustaining HUD-VASH housing and concludes with a summary of study findings and policy implications.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

The NCHAV led this multisite study conducted at four HUD-VASH programs. Research staff used administrative data to describe HUD-VASH participants and identify study respondents to provide subjective, contextual data to support the analyses of administrative data. At each study site, research staff selected a subsample of participants to be recruited for individual, structured interviews; a portion of those participants also responded to open-ended qualitative interviews. Finally, research staff from NCHAV visited each of the study sites to collect program-level information from local housing authority staff and VA case managers.

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Philadelphia. In addition, each of the study sites received IRB approvals from their respective VAMCs and affiliated academic institutions, where applicable.

STUDY SITE SELECTION

During FFY 2012, the research team and NCHAV leadership selected a sample of HUD-VASH programs throughout the country. Selected sites were large enough to recruit a sufficient study sample based on the sites' voucher utilization for FFY 2008–2011. In addition, the sites represented wide geographic and programmatic variation. The four study sites were:

- Houston, Texas
- Los Angeles, California
- Palo Alto, California
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Philadelphia served as the coordinating site; in that role, research staff affiliated with NCHAV oversaw the project and ensured, to the extent possible, that each study site conducted study procedures consistently. Two additional sites were originally included in the study: Tampa, Florida, and Bedford, Massachusetts. The Tampa site left the study before subject recruitment. Although the Bedford site received approval from the local IRB for this study and commenced recruitment, only 32 Veterans were recruited during the study period. Because this study was intended to assess findings within and across sites, the Bedford sample was insufficient for inclusion in this report.

VETERAN SAMPLE SELECTION

The study population comprised Veterans who were admitted to the HUD-VASH program, obtained a HUD-VASH voucher, and met the following criteria to be included in one of three study groups:

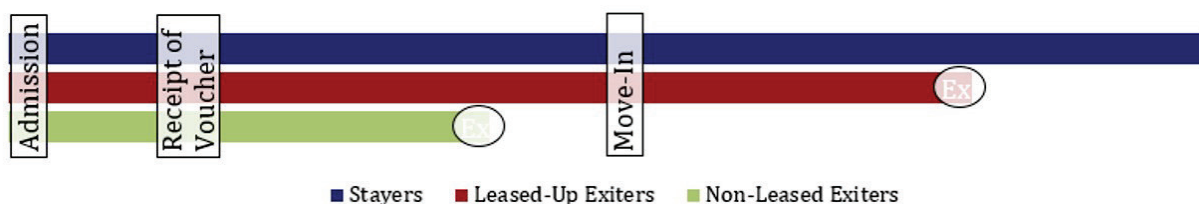
- Stayers—Obtained a lease with a HUD-VASH voucher and remained in the housing unit with the voucher for 600 days or longer and had not exited the program at the time of selection into the study

- Leased-up exiters—Exited HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit, regardless of reason for exit
- Nonleased exiters—Exited HUD-VASH after obtaining a voucher but before leasing a housing unit, regardless of reason for exit

For the purposes of this study, an exit from HUD-VASH means that a Veteran exited HUD-VASH case management and is no longer receiving supportive services from the program (i.e., by leaving one of the two components of the program, the Veteran is considered to have exited). Exit status is indicated by VA case managers in VA administrative data systems; however, there is no indication of whether Veterans who exited case management continued to use their HUD-VASH voucher to subsidize their housing expenses. Therefore, this study did not explore the relationship between an exit from HUD-VASH case management and an exit from voucher-subsidized housing.⁵

Exhibit 2.1 depicts the pathways of each of the study groups into and out of the program.

Exhibit 2.1 Study Group Pathways Into and Out of HUD-VASH



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Throughout this report, results are presented for HUD-VASH participants at each of the study sites—with some exceptions noted—as well as a subsample of HUD-VASH participants who responded to surveys, referred to as “study respondents” and a subsample of study respondents who participated in semi-structured interviews, referred to as “qualitative respondents.”

HUD-VASH Participants

A total of 7,383 Veterans (63.8 percent of all HUD-VASH participants at the four study sites) met the study criteria. The research team identified HUD-VASH participants at each study site using existing administrative data. Veterans included in analyses met the criteria for one of the

⁵ In-house analysis recently conducted by HUD indicates that among 64,000 Veterans who exited HUD-VASH case management nationally between 2008 and 2016, voucher status is unknown for about one quarter; among the 47,000 Veterans for whom voucher status is known, a small proportion (10 percent) ended participation in HUD housing assistance more than 45 days before exiting case management and more than half ended housing assistance within 45 days before or after exiting case management; of the one-third of exiters who continued housing assistance, at least half continued housing assistance for a year or more after exiting case management.

study groups: stayers, leased-up exiters, or nonleased exiters. For Veterans with multiple entries into the program, research staff retained only the most recent entry. Approximately one-third of HUD-VASH participants did not meet the criteria for one of the three study groups, including Veterans who were new to the program and had not yet received a voucher or had not yet moved into a unit, housed Veterans who had not yet lived in a rented unit for more than 600 days, and Veterans who exited HUD-VASH before receiving a voucher.

Veterans in Los Angeles constituted more than one-half (51.0 percent) of the study sample, followed by 23.9 percent in Houston, 17.4 percent in Palo Alto, and 7.6 percent in Philadelphia. Leased-up exiters made up the largest study group (41.8 percent), followed by stayers (37.8 percent) and nonleased exiters (20.4 percent). Exhibit 2.2 provides the sample sizes for HUD-VASH participants included in analyses by study site and group.

Exhibit 2.2 HUD-VASH Participant Count

	Stayers N=2,788		Leased-Up Exiters N=3,088		Nonleased Exiters N=1,507		Total N=7,383			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Houston	495	17.8	1,013	32.8	260	17.3	1,770	23.9		
Los Angeles	1,643	58.9	1,251	40.5	873	57.9	3,767	51.0		
Palo Alto	314	11.3	680	22.0	293	19.4	1,287	17.4		
Philadelphia	336	12.1	144	4.7	81	5.4	561	7.6		
	Houston N=1,768		Los Angeles N=3,767		Palo Alto N=1,287		Philadelphia N=561		Total N=7,383	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Stayers	495	28.0	1,643	43.6	314	24.4	336	59.9	2,788	37.8
Leased-up exiters	1,013	57.3	1,251	33.2	680	52.8	144	25.7	3,088	41.8
Nonleased exiters	260	14.7	873	23.2	293	22.8	81	14.4	1,507	20.4

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

The program admission years for HUD-VASH participants are listed in exhibit 2.3. The majority of Veterans meeting study criteria entered the program during or after 2011.

Exhibit 2.4 indicates the average length of time that HUD-VASH participants remained in the program. Because stayers did not have an exit date, their length of stay was calculated between voucher issuance or move-in and the end of the study's observation period (December 2, 2014). On average, stayers were housed through HUD-VASH for more than 3 years (1,148 days); leased-up exiters remained in housing for more than 1 1/2 years (658 days) before exiting; and nonleased exiters left the program after nearly 5 months (148 days).

Exhibit 2.5 provides data on the number of HUD-VASH participants who remained housed through the program for at least 1 or 2 years. The majority of participants who moved into housing stayed for at least 2 years. Among leased-up exiters, three-quarters stayed for at least 1 year.

Exhibit 2.3 Year of Program Admission, HUD-VASH Participants

	Stayers N=2,783		Leased-Up Exiters N=3,088		Nonleased Exiters N=1,503	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
2008 or before	49	1.8	85	2.8	1	0.1
2009	350	12.6	500	16.2	20	1.3
2010	489	17.6	668	21.6	43	2.9
2011	1,018	36.6	914	29.6	243	16.2
2012	832	29.9	585	18.9	338	22.5
2013	45	1.6	312	10.1	502	33.4
2014	0	0.0	24	0.8	356	23.7

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Exhibit 2.4 Days in HUD-VASH, by Quartile, HUD-VASH Participants

	N	25%	50%	75%	Mean
Stayers					
Voucher issuance to end of observation period	2,781	917	1,153	1,462	1,230
Move-in to end of observation period	2,781	844	1,076	1,391	1,148
Leased-up exiters					
Voucher issuance to exit	3,068	433	651	968	731
Move-in to exit	3,073	365	573	889	658
Nonleased exiters					
Voucher issuance to exit	920	89	129	177	148

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Exhibit 2.5 Years in HUD-VASH Housing, HUD-VASH Participants

	All Study Groups N=5,876		Leased-Up Exiters Only N=3,088	
	N	%	N	%
1 year or longer	5,089	86.6	2,309	74.8
2 years or longer	3,551	60.4	1,116	36.1

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Study Respondents

The process for recruiting and enrolling subjects differed to some degree by study site; those variations are summarized in exhibit 2.6. Recruitment lists were developed using administrative data provided by the coordinating site and input from local HUD-VASH staff. Sites with access to a larger sample pool randomized their recruitment lists and attempted to recruit all Veterans on the lists.

Exhibit 2.6 Study Site Recruitment and Enrollment

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Recruitment list	Stayers–VA HUD-VASH supervisor generated list of current HUD-VASH participants; research staff randomized list and created recruitment list twice as large as the desired sample size (anticipating 50% response rate). Exiters–VA HUD-VASH housing coordinator generated list of Veterans who exited the program during the 6 months before the study start date.	Stayers–NCHAV provided randomized stayer list twice as large as the desired sample size (anticipating 50% response rate); when site attempted to recruit all Veterans but still had not reached target, NCHAV provided second randomized stayer list of 100 Veterans. Exiters–NCHAV provided list of all Veterans who exited HUD-VASH.	Stayers–VA HUD-VASH supervisor identified Veterans currently participating in HUD-VASH using local HUD-VASH database; research staff randomized list and created recruitment list twice as large as the desired sample size (anticipating 50% response rate). Exiters–VA HUD-VASH supervisor identified Veterans who exited HUD-VASH using local HUD-VASH database.	Stayers–NCHAV provided randomized stayer list twice as large as the desired sample size (anticipating 50% response rate); when the site attempted to recruit all Veterans but did not reach target, NCHAV provided second list with remaining 85 Veterans. Exiters–NCHAV provided list of all Veterans who exited HUD-VASH; VA case manager identified exiters and regularly provided a recent exiter list to research staff.
Enrollment period	03/12/14–07/31/14	11/25/13–06/16/14	07/16/13–07/29/14	04/17/13–07/17/14
Mode of interviews	In-person interviews ^a	In-person interviews and three quantitative interviews via telephone	In-person and telephone interviews	In-person interviews
Incentives	\$20 cash, bus pass	\$20 cash voucher redeemable at VAMC/\$20 electronic funds transfer for Veterans interviewed by telephone	\$20 canteen voucher	\$20 cash, 2 bus tokens

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

a. Research staff in Houston conducted qualitative interviews with all exiters and stayers until they reached thematic saturation. In addition, they administered a Working Alliance Inventory-Short Revised (WAI-SR), a Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988), a Relationship Questionnaire (Griffin and Bartholomew, 1994), and a Health Literacy measure (Chew, Bradley, and Boyko, 2004; Chew et al., 2008) at the end of the interviews.

Once eligible Veterans were identified, research staff at each site first contacted the Veterans by mailing a study flyer and recruitment letter, asking the Veterans to contact them with questions or to indicate interest in participating in the study. If research staff did not receive a response within 2 weeks of mailing recruitment materials, they called each Veteran, asked if the Veteran had received the recruitment letter, reviewed the contents of the letter if the Veteran had not received it, and asked the Veteran whether he or she wanted to opt out of the study. Local VA case managers also informed exiting Veterans of the opportunity to participate in the study by verbally summarizing the information contained in the study flyer and providing the Veterans with a copy of the study flyer. Veterans received an incentive for their participation.

Power analyses and expected participation rates from another study of exits from PSH (Wong, Hadley, and Culhane, 2006) indicated that the subsample of Veterans who would respond to in-person interviews should include 533 respondents: 70 percent (N=373) stayers and 30 percent (N=160) exiters. The power analysis is described in appendix C.

The final sample that responded to interviews comprised 508 Veterans; the majority (72.8 percent) of the respondent sample was stayers, and the remaining were leased-up exiters (15.7 percent) and nonleased exiters (11.4 percent). Exhibit 2.7 summarizes the respondent sample size by study site and group. Additional information about the subsample of study respondents is included in appendix D.

Each of the study sites also conducted qualitative interviews with a portion of study respondents. The target was to include one-third of all exiters (either leased-up or nonleased) in the subsample, for a total of 14 qualitative interviews with exiters, as well as an equal number of stayers for comparative purposes. Exhibit 2.8 provides the size of the qualitative sample by study group and study site.

Exhibit 2.7 Study Respondent Count

	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters		Total			
	N=370		N=80		N=58		N=508			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Houston	92	24.9	8	10.0	5	8.6	105	20.7		
Los Angeles	95	25.7	25	31.3	16	27.6	136	26.8		
Palo Alto	86	23.2	24	30.0	22	37.9	132	26.0		
Philadelphia	97	26.2	23	28.8	15	25.9	135	26.6		
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia		Total	
	N=105		N=136		N=132		N=135		N=508	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Stayers	92	87.6	95	69.9	86	65.2	97	71.9	370	72.8
Leased-up exiters	8	7.6	25	18.4	24	18.2	23	17.0	80	15.7
Nonleased exiters	5	4.8	16	11.8	22	16.7	15	11.1	58	11.4

Source: Veteran Survey

Exhibit 2.8 Qualitative Respondent Count

	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters		Total			
	N=56		N=28		N=26		N=110			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Houston	14	25.0	8	28.6	5	19.2	27	24.5		
Los Angeles	14	25.0	7	25.0	7	26.9	28	25.5		
Palo Alto	14	25.0	5	17.9	8	30.8	27	24.5		
Philadelphia	14	25.0	8	28.6	6	23.1	28	25.5		
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia		Total	
	N=27		N=28		N=27		N=28		N=110	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Stayers	14	51.9	14	50.0	14	51.9	14	50.0	56	50.9
Leased-up exiters	8	29.6	7	25.0	5	18.5	8	28.6	28	25.5
Nonleased exiters	5	18.5	7	25.0	8	29.6	6	21.4	26	23.6

Source: Veteran Interview

DATA COLLECTION

Three types of data were included in the study: administrative data, Veteran data (collected through surveys and interviews), and program-level data. Only the NCHAV research team collected administrative and program-level data, whereas each study site participated in Veteran survey and interview data collection, with procedures reviewed and approved by local IRBs.

Veterans

This study examined administrative data and primary Veteran data. Research staff affiliated with the coordinating site obtained administrative data from existing VA databases; staff at each site collected primary Veteran data during closed-ended surveys and open-ended qualitative interviews.

Administrative Data

The research team accessed the following administrative databases to obtain information about Veterans' demographics, medical diagnoses, and military history, as well as their stays in the HUD-VASH program:

- VA Medical Record—demographics; medical, mental or behavioral health, and substance use conditions; VA services use.
- VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System (HOMES)—HUD-VASH records, including program dates and exit information.

The research team accessed administrative data for the period beginning 12 months before a Veteran's admission to HUD-VASH and 12 months following exit from HUD-VASH, if applicable. Exhibit 2.9 provides a summary of administrative data accessed for this study. A list of variables, including their source and definitions, is included in appendix C.

Exhibit 2.9 Administrative Data Sources and Variables

Database	Category	Variables
VA Medical Record	Demographics	Sex, age, race, ethnicity, marital status, and VA enrollment priority group
VA Medical Record	Military service	Period of service and combat experience
VA Medical Record	Diagnoses and VA services use	Medical health and mental or behavioral health diagnoses; frequency of VA primary care, mental or behavioral health, and substance use outpatient visits; frequency of emergency department visits; and frequency of inpatient medical health, mental or behavioral health, and substance use inpatient visits and lengths of stay
VA Medical Record	VA case management	VA case management services received before, during, and following HUD-VASH enrollment
VA HOMES	HUD-VASH program dates	Program enrollment date, voucher receipt date, lease date, exit date, time to placement in permanent housing, and length of stay
VA HOMES	HUD-VASH program exit	Reason for exit

VA HOMES = VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System. HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing.

HOMES data related to demographics, military service, incarceration history, and homelessness history, as well as living situation at program exit, were not reported here due to missing data.⁶ Finally, given that this study was initiated before the institution of Housing First and the program's accelerated focus on chronic homelessness, comparing groups related to those program measures was not possible. However, analyses did take into account whether Veterans entered HUD-VASH before or after the transition to a Housing First approach.

Survey Data

Interviewers at each study site used an interview protocol—specifically tailored to each of the three study groups—to conduct in-person, one-on-one surveys with a subsample of HUD-VASH participants either onsite at VAMC facilities or by telephone. The objective of those surveys was to collect subjective data from study respondents to contextualize the analyses based on administrative data. Surveys included questions related to the following areas:

- Housing and homelessness history—Interviewers used the Residential Time-Line Follow-Back Calendar⁷ method to identify where Veterans were living when they enrolled in HUD-VASH and during their participation in the program (Tsemberis et al., 2007).
- HUD-VASH housing process—Interviewers asked a series of questions to collect more detailed information about the ease with which Veterans enrolled in the program, obtained a housing voucher, and leased an apartment.
- Housing satisfaction—Using a scale measuring apartment and neighborhood satisfaction, interviewers assessed Veterans' satisfaction with the housing they obtained through HUD-VASH (Tsemberis et al., 2003).
- Income, work, and education—Several questions assessed Veterans' sources of income during their tenure in HUD-VASH, as well as whether they were involved in any educational or vocational programs.
- VA case manager relationship—This section estimated the number of monthly VA case management contacts Veterans had while in HUD-VASH, as well as the extent to which they worked well with their VA case managers, based on questions adapted from the Working Alliance Inventory, Short Form (Hovarth, 1987, 1989).
- Medical and mental health conditions—This section assessed Veterans' medical and mental health status and ability to perform activities of daily living during their tenure in HUD-VASH; several of these questions were based on items included in the RAND Health Medical Outcomes Study (Hays, 1994).
- Substance use status—Two questions, influenced by the Addiction Severity Index (Treatment Research Institute, 1998), asked Veterans to indicate the severity of substance use issues during their tenure in HUD-VASH, as well as whether they accessed inpatient or outpatient treatment during that time.

⁶ Of the HUD-VASH participants, 40.5 percent had missing demographic, military service, and incarceration history data, and 44.4 percent had missing data regarding their homelessness history. Among exiters, 26.8 percent had missing data related to housing status, housing stability, and living arrangement at exit.

⁷ This is a validated method of collecting residential histories from homeless people that involves organizing the chronology around events of personal significance and using open-ended dialogue with the respondent.

In addition, interviewers asked study respondents about their program exit, including whether the exit was voluntary or not, the reasons that contributed to the Veteran's leaving the program, and whether HUD-VASH staff assisted the Veteran in finding a place to live following program exit. Exiters also provided information about their current housing situation, postexit contact with VA staff, and their income, work, and education following program exit. Copies of the surveys and a list of variables are included in appendix C.

Interview Data

For a subsample of study respondents, interviewers conducted semistructured qualitative interviews based on interview guides developed by NCHAV research staff. Those questions prompted Veterans to walk through their experiences in HUD-VASH, from how they learned about the program to their housing search, as well as their relationship with their VA case manager and any positive or challenging experiences they had in the program. Research staff audio recorded these interviews, which were then transcribed verbatim and de-identified by an independent third party. Members of the research team checked the transcripts for accuracy against the audio recordings. Copies of the interview guides are included in appendix C.

Programs

The NCHAV research team visited each study site between April and June 2014 and interviewed staff affiliated with the HUD-VASH program at local housing authorities, as well as HUD-VASH VA case management staff. Those interviews followed an interview guide and were recorded and transcribed. Copies of the interview guides are included in appendix C. Descriptions of the sites are current as of the date of the site visit and are included in appendices E through H.

DATA ANALYSIS

NCHAV research staff analyzed the quantitative data and contracted with the Mixed Methods Research Lab (MMRL) at the University of Pennsylvania to code and assist in analyzing the qualitative data.

Quantitative Data Analysis

During the data collection period, research staff from each of the study sites survey data to the NCHAV research team, which reviewed a sample of 10 completed surveys from each of the sites and compared them with the site-specific dataset to ensure appropriate data entry. At the completion of the data collection period, NCHAV research staff merged the files into one dataset and cleaned the data, checking for missing data and logical inconsistencies. Not all HUD-VASH participants were included in every analysis because of missing dates or other variables.

NCHAV researchers ran frequencies and tests of significance (ANOVA, chi-square, t-tests) by study group and study site; levels of significance are indicated in the exhibits. Using administrative data for HUD-VASH participants, research staff ran a series of multivariate analyses: multiple regression analysis modeling duration of housing process (exhibit 5.2); logistic regression modeling exits from HUD-VASH (exhibit 8.7); latent class analysis identifying profiles of leased-up and nonleased exiters (exhibits 8.8–8.11); and Cox proportional hazards survival analysis for time to return to homelessness within 360 days (exhibits 8.12, 8.13). Where applicable, reference groups used in the statistical models—typically either the most conceptually appropriate or the largest subgroup—are referenced either in the table or in footnotes.

Detailed methods for each of the multivariate analyses presented in this report are included in appendix C.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Research staff at the MMRL entered de-identified transcripts into NVivo 10 (QSR International, 2012), a program that facilitates systematic qualitative analysis, and employed a thematic analysis approach to support the organization of data into thematic categories (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey, 2012). Following line-by-line readings of a sample of interviews, staff developed a coding dictionary. To ensure coding accuracy and facilitate intercoder reliability, staff explicitly defined each code in the dictionary and provided examples of the appropriate use of the code. Staff also developed codes a priori from the interview guide.

Using the Constant Comparative Method, research staff compared newly collected data with the initial coding schema to ensure the comprehensiveness of the coding dictionary (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Viera and Garrett, 2005). Two research assistants, each with extensive training in qualitative analysis, coded each transcript and independently double coded 20 percent (N=22) of the sample. During the initial coding phase, discrepancies in coding were resolved by consensus and review with senior members of the research team. Upon coding completion, intercoder reliability was evaluated using the Kappa statistic and review of percent agreement by code (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey, 2012; Viera and Garrett, 2005). The median Kappa was 0.8, with a range of 0.6–1.0, indicating substantial to nearly perfect agreement; that finding was supported by percent agreement analysis, which yielded 95 percent (range 82–100 percent) agreement of the codes examined for this report (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey, 2012; Viera and Garrett, 2005).

Research staff organized emergent codes into the following themes:

- Participant background, including personal and homeless history.
- HUD-VASH processes, including program facilitators and barriers.
- Exiting experiences for leased-up and nonleased exiters.
- Veteran-generated recommendations.

Research staff then compared the relative frequencies of themes and looked for code co-occurrence, including differences across study groups. Qualitative findings included in this report do not represent mutually exclusive categories, as many participants reported multiple types of experiences within each thematic area, and other participants reported none. Qualitative quotes included throughout this report were edited to eliminate repetition, remove filler words and stock phrases, and clarify references made by the speaker. A copy of the qualitative data-coding dictionary is included in appendix C.

CHAPTER 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF HUD-VASH PARTICIPANTS

This chapter describes demographics, military history, and medical and mental or behavioral health conditions of each of the study groups—stayers, leased-up exiters, and nonleased exiters—for the sample of HUD-VASH participants. A list of variables is included in appendix C. Supporting data tables are included in appendix I.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The vast majority of HUD-VASH participants across the study sites were male, regardless of study group (88.9 percent of stayers, 89.1 percent of leased-up exiters, and 90.5 percent of nonleased exiters; N=7,341). However, the age distribution varied by study group. Nonleased exiters were generally younger than both stayers and leased-up exiters, but this group had the largest proportion of Veterans older than 65 years (see exhibit 3.1).

As shown in exhibit 3.2, the majority of stayers and leased-up exiters identified as Black, whereas nonleased exiters more often identified as White. The vast majority of HUD-VASH participants identified as non-Hispanic.

Exhibit 3.1 Age, HUD-VASH Participants

	Stayers N=2,776		Leased-Up Exiters N=3,074		Nonleased Exiters N=1,491	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<35	233	8.4	357	11.6	229	15.4
35-44	269	9.7	366	11.9	190	12.7
45-54	1,006	36.2	1,045	34.0	417	28.0
55-64	1,025	36.9	1,087	35.4	501	33.6
≥65	243	8.8	219	7.1	154	10.3

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Medical Record

Exhibit 3.2 Race and Ethnicity, HUD-VASH Participants

	Stayers N=2,693		Leased-Up Exiters N=2,999		Nonleased Exiters N=1,423	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Race						
Black or African-American	1,627	60.4	1,721	57.4	634	44.6
White	925	34.3	1,105	36.8	683	48.0
Other	141	5.2	173	5.8	106	7.4
Ethnicity						
Hispanic/Latino	189	7.0	234	7.7	148	10.2
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	2,500	92.1	2,758	91.2	1,278	88.1
Multiple	25	0.9	32	1.1	24	1.7

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Medical Record

About one-third of HUD-VASH participants were never married and more than one-third were divorced; leased-up exiters more frequently reported being divorced than did the other groups, and nonleased exiters were more frequently married (see exhibit 3.3).

Veterans' eligibility for healthcare through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is based on VA's enrollment priority groups, which indicate the extent to which a Veteran is receiving compensation as a result of a disability incurred during military service, as well as whether a Veteran is very low income. VA enrollment priority groups are collapsed into five categories: (1) Veterans with a service-connected disability 50 percent or more disabling; (2) Veterans with a service-connected disability less than 50 percent disabling; (3) Veterans with no service-connected disability but Medicaid eligible, which includes Veterans who are not disabled but are low income; (4) Veterans with no service-connected disability and not Medicaid eligible, which includes Veterans who are neither disabled nor low income; and (5) Veterans meeting other criteria for eligibility (for example, exposure to certain hazards).

Higher service-connected disability ratings likely reflect a greater level of disability, as well as higher income received by the Veteran from the VA. About one-half of HUD-VASH participants had no service-connected disability but were very low income. Most of the remaining Veterans had a service-connected disability, with leased-up and nonleased exiters more likely than stayers to have a service-connected disability of 50 percent or more (see exhibit 3.4).

Exhibit 3.3 Marital Status, HUD-VASH Participants

	Stayers N=2,765		Leased-Up Exiters N=3,071		Nonleased Exiters N=1,486	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	286	10.3	360	11.7	207	13.9
Widowed	80	2.9	90	2.9	38	2.6
Separated	252	9.1	310	10.1	141	9.5
Divorced	1,048	37.9	1,372	44.7	554	37.3
Never married	1,099	39.7	939	30.6	546	36.7

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Medical Record

Exhibit 3.4 VA Enrollment Priority Group, HUD-VASH Participants

	Stayers N=2,774		Leased-Up Exiters N=3,064		Nonleased Exiters N=1,477	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
≥ 50% service-connected disability	476	17.2	824	26.9	398	26.9
< 50% service-connected disability	528	19.0	552	18.0	262	17.7
No service-connected disability; Medicaid eligible	1,653	59.6	1,510	49.3	736	49.8
No service-connected disability; not Medicaid eligible	3	0.1	4	0.1	5	0.3
Other	114	4.1	174	5.7	76	5.1

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Medical Record

MILITARY HISTORY

The majority of HUD-VASH participants served during either the Vietnam or post-Vietnam era (75.3 percent of stayers, 70.8 percent of leased-up exiters, and 62.0 percent of nonleased exiters). Both leased-up and nonleased exiters were more likely than stayers to have served in the Persian Gulf War; of those Veterans, nonleased exiters were the most likely to have served during that conflict. Nonleased exiters were also more likely to have been deployed during Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF), Iraqi Freedom (OIF), or New Dawn (OND). Only a small percentage of HUD-VASH participants had an indication in their VA medical record of exposure to combat (see exhibit 3.5).

Exhibit 3.5 Period of Service and Combat Exposure, HUD-VASH Participants

	Stayers N=2,776		Leased-Up Exiters N=3,074		Nonleased Exiters N=1,490	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Period of service						
World War II	7	0.3	9	0.3	4	0.3
Korean War	44	1.6	24	0.8	14	0.9
Vietnam era	1,097	39.5	1,197	38.9	480	32.2
Post-Vietnam era	993	35.8	980	31.9	444	29.8
Persian Gulf War (including OEF/OIF/OND)	574	20.7	796	25.9	508	34.1
Other	61	2.2	68	2.2	40	2.7
Combat exposure						
OEF/OIF deployment	123	4.4	200	6.5	177	11.9
Combat exposure	89	3.2	146	4.7	64	4.3

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Medical Record

MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND MENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

About one-fourth of HUD-VASH participants had any of the 25 medical conditions assessed for this study; rates of the four most prevalent conditions were consistent across study groups. Both types of exiters were more likely to have mental or behavioral health conditions: leased-up exiters had the highest rate of any mental or behavioral health condition, followed by nonleased exiters. Leased-up exiters were the most likely to have a diagnosis of depression or drug abuse, whereas nonleased exiters had higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), schizophrenia and other psychoses, alcohol abuse, and suicide or self-inflicted injury (see exhibit 3.6).

Exhibit 3.6 Medical Conditions and Mental or Behavioral Health Conditions, HUD-VASH Participants

	Stayers N=2,776		Leased-Up Exiters N=3,074		Nonleased Exiters N=1,491	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Medical conditions						
Any medical condition	703	25.3	853	27.7	388	26.0
Most prevalent medical conditions						
Hypertension	378	13.6	452	14.7	203	13.6
Diabetes, uncomplicated	151	5.4	181	5.9	64	4.3
Chronic pulmonary disease	111	4.0	142	4.6	72	4.8
Obesity	106	3.8	144	4.7	50	3.4
Traumatic brain injury	4	0.1	12	0.4	5	0.3
Mental or behavioral health conditions						
Any mental or behavioral health condition	931	33.5	1,243	40.4	564	37.8
Post-traumatic stress disorder	165	5.9	251	8.2	158	10.6
Depression	315	11.3	420	13.7	191	12.8
Psychoses	327	11.8	456	14.8	247	16.6
Schizophrenia	212	7.6	332	10.8	176	11.8
Alcohol abuse	435	15.7	594	19.3	299	20.1
Drug abuse	592	21.3	818	26.6	355	23.8
Suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury	100	3.6	169	5.5	92	6.2

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. Participants may have multiple conditions.

Source: VA Medical Record

DESCRIPTIVE BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

During qualitative interviews, study respondents reported experiences related to their physical and mental health, addiction, incarceration, family, and other concerns, including a history of physical and sexual trauma, and how those factors related to their housing history. The most common background characteristics that emerged from analysis of Veterans’ personal histories are identified in exhibit 3.7.

Exhibit 3.7 Background Characteristics, Qualitative Respondents

Criminal history	Medical concerns	Substance use
Family concerns	Mental health concerns	

Source: Veteran Interview

Veterans from all study groups described background characteristics that affected their housing history. Stayers described their circumstances before entering HUD-VASH.

I was in [a shelter] here and it was for... I had a problem with crack cocaine. And I finally, for the last, well, I am clean for around about these 4 or 5 years. And, you know, it is sensibility, having my mind back. PTSD works on you in such a way that, I mean, it comes and it haunts you. And—the irony on myself—maybe I am just saying it too much, I used to be into law enforcement. And, I knew that some things that I used to do were wrong. But, I

mean, I kept stepping over that line. And, then it got grandiose to a point that I really did not care. That is what PTSD will do to you, a part of the effects of it... I had children, and I kind of at one time turned my back on them, and that was really, that was really unheard of. So, I decided I better check myself into a program, which I did. And, like I said, with this help right here, with the VASH program, they set me back onto the point of being more responsible, and bringing myself back to where I used to be. So, I mean, it is a Godsend to me. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

I was comfortable in the car, but not when it got cold or somebody would see my pills and they would steal them out of my car thinking they were really hard drugs. But they were psych meds and stuff like that. I am a diabetic too. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

I take about seven medications that, thank God, the VA helps me with that... [The VA] was close by. It was very convenient for me. But over the years that I was there—I think I was there like maybe 6 years—the last few years I started going downhill and to the point where I lost my place. I was in the streets. I wanted to end my life. This police officer told me about the VA... He said, you know what? You should go to the VA and seek help. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

Compared with stayers, both types of exiters more frequently referenced personal background factors that influenced their housing experiences. Leased-up exiters more often shared mental health concerns, whereas nonleased exiters more frequently referenced medical concerns, substance use, and family issues. Some examples of the complex background characteristics that preceded Veterans' entries into HUD-VASH follow.

I can't do no work. They already know I was there and I was sick, throwing up and everything because when he asked me to work I was throwing up, I couldn't stand up, nothing; they had to get me out of there. So he knows that I'm sick, you know what I mean, because I have diabetes so sometime I mess up. I don't take my medicine, none of that. But at the same time that's, get away from her—it's an accident waiting to happen. Maybe go to jail this time and might not get out. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

And my son—because I was pretty much bouncing around from place to place and my son was at my friend's house and was not able to see me all the time, he was like getting in trouble in school and so I had to get—you know, he got some help at the school that he was going. And he finally stabilized. (Nonleased exiter—Philadelphia)

When [my son] died and the whole world shifted at that moment. I say this, and I do not mean to be funny with other people, I call him my baby. He was 28 years old. He was my baby. He is my youngest child. He died and when he died, everything went like a ball. It started steamrolling. Once we got him settled over there at the—they shipped him back here. After we got him all in the grave and everything, then I could start focusing back on myself. My lease was coming up to leave. I did not want to make a longer lease. I just decided to leave and I left. It's not that I didn't want to live there, I just left. I just started figuring out everything. I stayed with my other son, my oldest son, but for—I left there and I came back. I finally got an apartment. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

SUMMARY

About 90 percent of Veterans who participated in the HUD-VASH programs at each of the study sites were male, regardless of study group. Stayers tended to be older than Veterans in the other

study groups and were most likely to be Black, non-Hispanic, and never married. Stayers most often served in the military during the Vietnam era. Although the prevalence of medical conditions was similar across study groups, stayers were least likely to have a mental or behavioral health condition.

Similar to stayers, leased-up exiters were most often Black, non-Hispanic, and served during the Vietnam era. However, leased-up exiters were most likely to be divorced and had the highest prevalence of any mental or behavioral health condition.

Finally, nonleased exiters were younger than Veterans in the other two study groups and most frequently identified as White and non-Hispanic. Nonleased exiters were as likely to be married as divorced and most frequently served during the Persian Gulf War or OEF/OIF/OND.

CHAPTER 4: FEATURES OF STUDY SITES

Four sites participated in the study: Houston, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Palo Alto, California; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This chapter details the homelessness and housing context for each of those sites and briefly describes local HUD-VASH practices and Veterans' experiences in the program. For analytical overviews of each site's implementation of HUD-VASH, see the case studies in Appendixes E through H. Supporting data tables may be found in appendix I.

POPULATION DATA

The total population of the study sites ranged from 1.3 million in Philadelphia to 7.7 million in Los Angeles. Veterans constituted slightly more than 5 percent of the population in Houston, Palo Alto, and Philadelphia, and only 3.8 percent of people in Los Angeles were Veterans. Veterans experienced poverty at about one-half the rate of the general population at each of the study sites, ranging from 7.4 percent in Palo Alto to 11.7 percent in Philadelphia (see exhibit 4.1).

Exhibit 4.1 Adult Population, 2013

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Overall	3,148,444	7,690,569	4,652,993	1,259,073
Veterans	162,451	295,347	236,174	68,553
% Veterans	5.2	3.8	5.1	5.4
Overall poverty rate	15.2	16.4	12.1	24.0
Veteran poverty rate	8.3	9.6	7.4	11.7

Note: Population statistics are based on 1-year estimates published by the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2013).

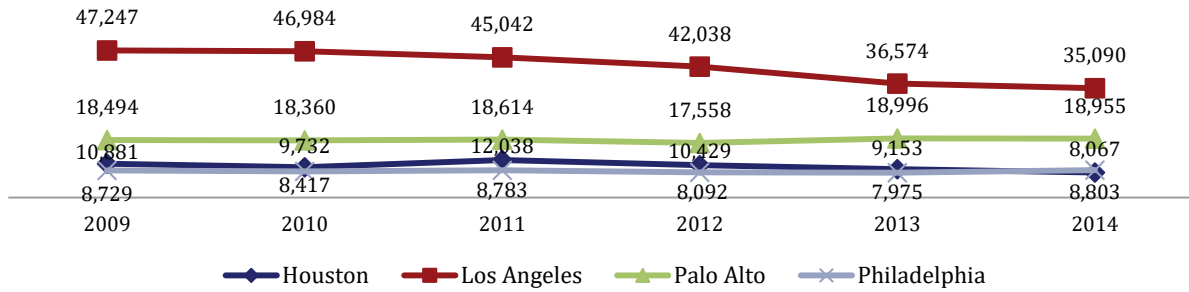
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING CONTEXT

The size of the general and Veteran homeless populations measured on one day in January remained fairly constant at the study sites between 2009 and 2014. Exhibit 4.2 illustrates the size of the general homeless population, and exhibit 4.3 illustrates the size of the Veteran homeless population at each of the study sites from 2009 to 2014.⁸

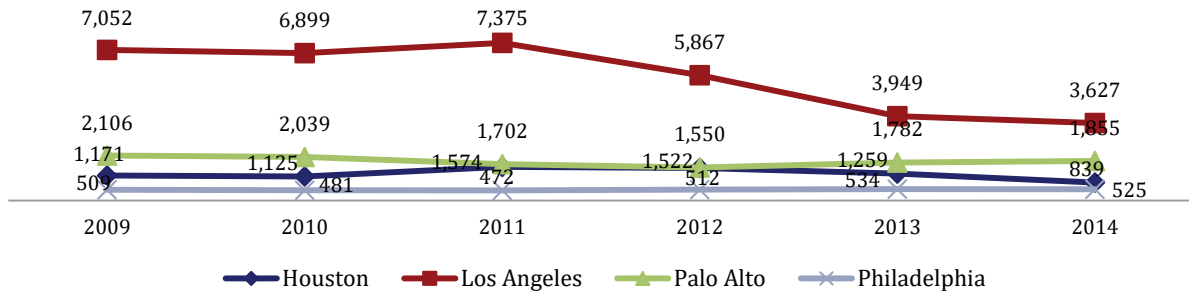
⁸ The size of the general and Veteran homeless populations reported here are based on the local VAMC catchment area; each catchment area includes at least a portion of multiple Continuums of Care (CoC) matched to the catchment area using zip codes (Mulpuri, Harris, and Ruege, 2014). Therefore, they will not match the CoC-level estimates for the major CoCs affiliated with the study sites.

Exhibit 4.2 Homeless Population, 2009–2014 | count



Source: Point-in-Time Count

Exhibit 4.3 Veteran Homeless Population, 2009–2014 | count



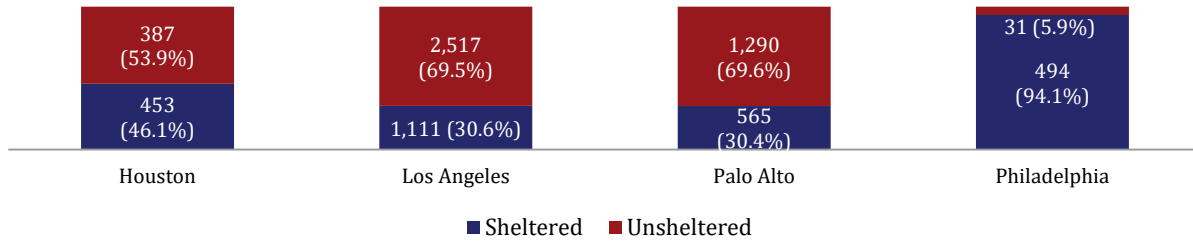
Source: Point-in-Time Count

Los Angeles had the largest homeless population—35,090—with Veterans accounting for 10.3 percent of homeless individuals. Palo Alto had the second largest homeless population—18,955—with Veterans accounting for 9.8 percent of homeless individuals. Philadelphia had the third largest homeless population—8,803—but a smaller proportion (6.0 percent) were Veterans. Houston had the smallest homeless population—8,067—and Veterans again accounted for approximately one in 10 homeless individuals (10.4 percent).

In 2014, more than two-thirds of Veterans experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles and Palo Alto were unsheltered. In Houston, about one-half of Veterans were unsheltered, and in Philadelphia—the study site with the least temperate climate—fewer than one in 10 were unsheltered (see exhibit 4.4).

Based on data from the 2013 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), the median rent at each of the study sites varied widely. Houston had the lowest median rent (\$872), followed by Philadelphia (\$912), Los Angeles (\$1,205), and Palo Alto (\$1,397). More than one-half of the residents of Los Angeles were renters, compared with slightly less than one-half at the other study sites (see exhibit 4.5).

Exhibit 4.4 Proportion Sheltered/Unsheltered Veteran Homeless, 2014 | count and percent



Source: Point-in-Time Count

Exhibit 4.5 Rental Market, 2013

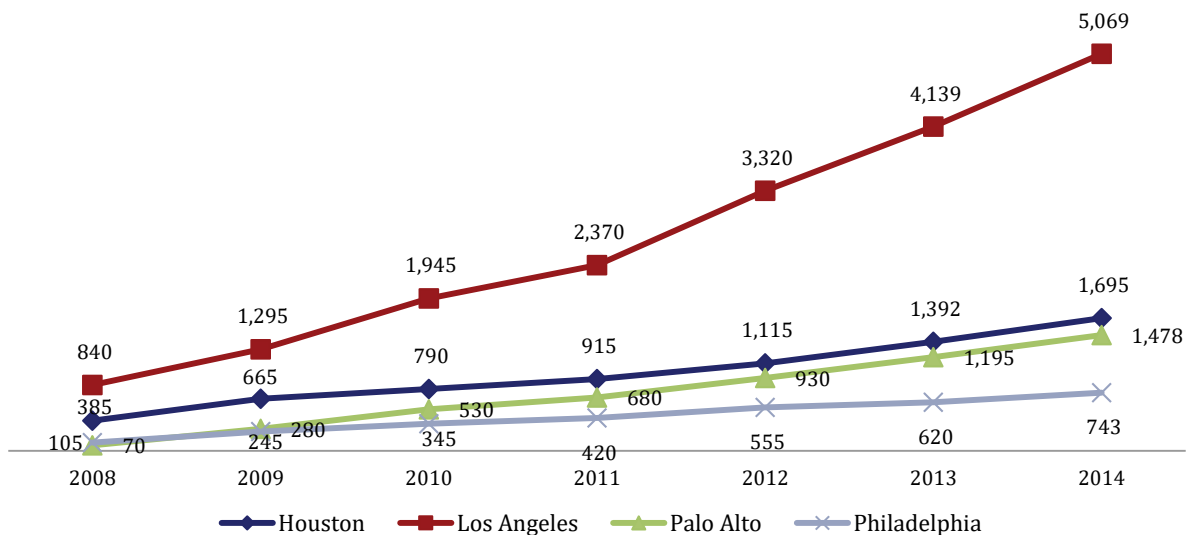
	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Median rent	\$872	\$1,205	\$1,397	\$912
Rent-occupied housing	45.7%	54.5%	45.0%	49.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

HUD-VASH VOUCHER ALLOCATION

As previously described, HUD-VASH vouchers are allocated based on need. Exhibit 4.6 displays the cumulative number of vouchers allocated through the VAMCs at each of the study sites for FFY 2008–2014, illustrating the growth of the program (HUD, 2016a).

Exhibit 4.6 HUD-VASH Voucher Allocation, 2008–2014 | count



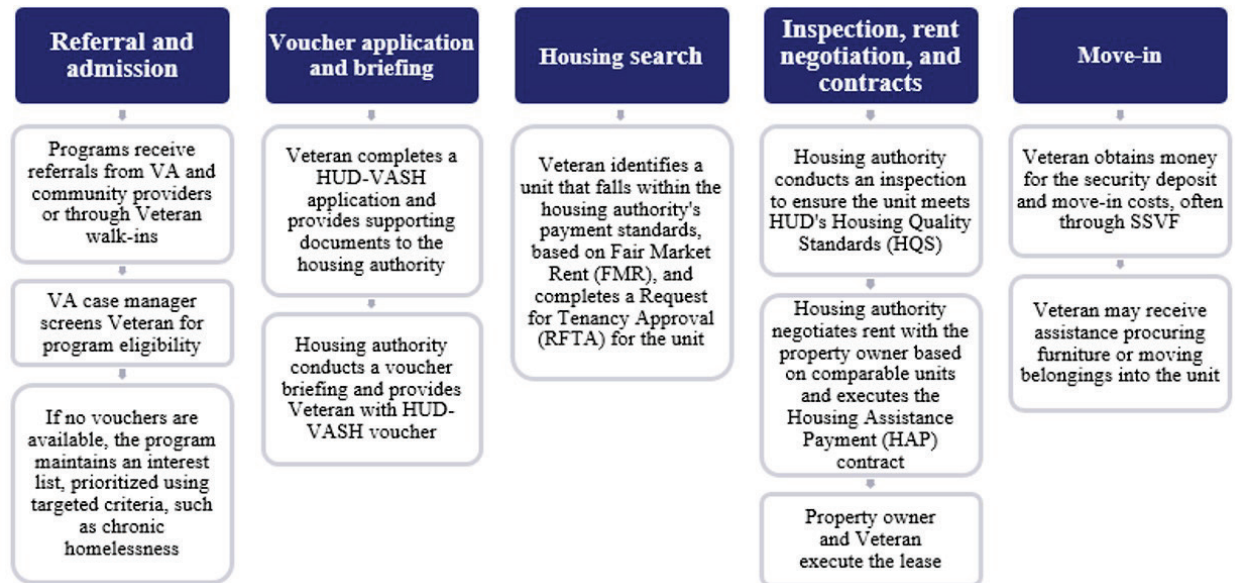
HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: HUD (2016a)

HUD-VASH PROCESSES

Although some aspects of HUD-VASH are operationalized uniformly across the country, each program has some latitude in how the local housing authorities and VA case management teams work together, requirements for VA case management, and other processes. In general, local HUD-VASH programs must incorporate the steps that follow, adapted for the collaborating HUD and VA agencies, into their program processes (see exhibit 4.7).

Exhibit 4.7 Overview of HUD-VASH Processes



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing. SSVF = Supportive Services for Veteran Families.

After moving into a housing unit, the Veteran is responsible for reexaminations if she or he experiences any income changes. The local housing authority also conducts regular (typically annual) recertifications to ensure that the Veteran continues to meet eligibility criteria; this also includes an inspection to ensure that the selected unit continues to meet HQS.

VA case management typically begins at program enrollment and continues for at least 1 year after move-in. Depending on local procedures, a Veteran may “graduate” from VA case management and continue to use the HUD-VASH voucher or transition to a regular HCV, if available.

STUDY SITE PROCESSES

The following sections outline how the HUD-VASH processes at each study site differ. An overview of each site is provided, followed by a figure that outlines the individual program processes as described by local housing authorities and VA case management teams, highlighting the diversity and complexity of HUD-VASH across these sites. Particularly in communities with more than one housing authority, process steps may be similar yet differ in number or execution across agencies. Study site processes are based on site interviews conducted during the spring and summer of 2014, following the adoption of Housing First; the sites were at varying stages of implementation. More detailed site descriptions are included in appendices E through H.

Houston

The Houston HUD-VASH program operates in Harris, Galveston, and Jefferson counties. The coordinating VA site is the Michael E. DeBakey VAMC in Houston, TX. The HUD-VASH program has 1,695 vouchers, including both tenant- and project-based vouchers. The majority of vouchers are held by the Houston Housing Authority (HHA, 1,042) and Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA, 546). HHA serves Veterans within the City of Houston, as well as up to five miles outside the city limits. HCHA serves Veterans anywhere within the county. Exhibit 4.8 outlines the general steps in Houston’s HUD-VASH processes, based on information provided by VA case management teams and housing authorities serving Houston and Harris County.

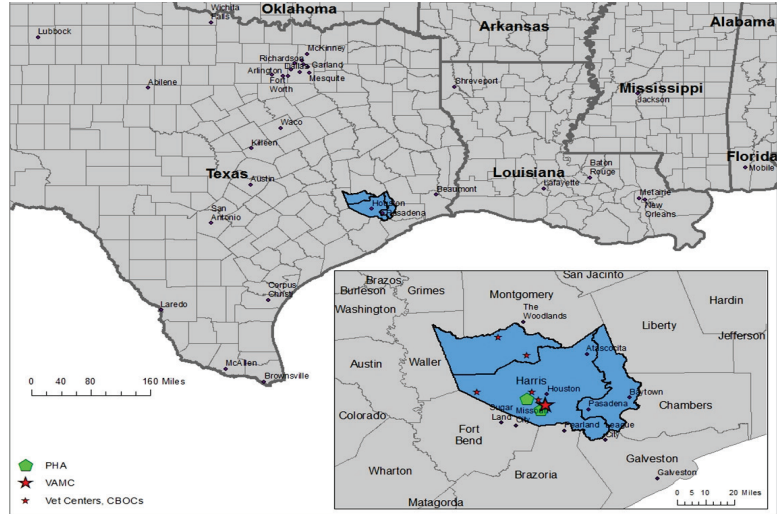
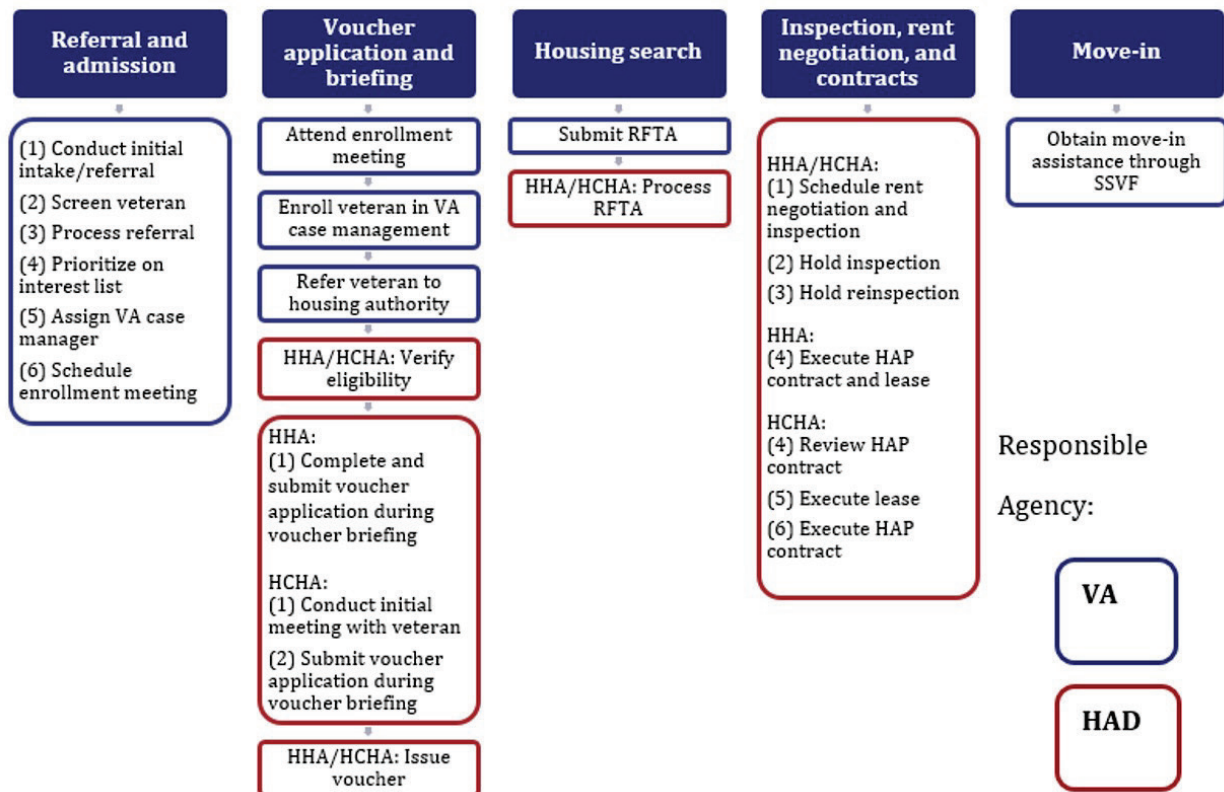


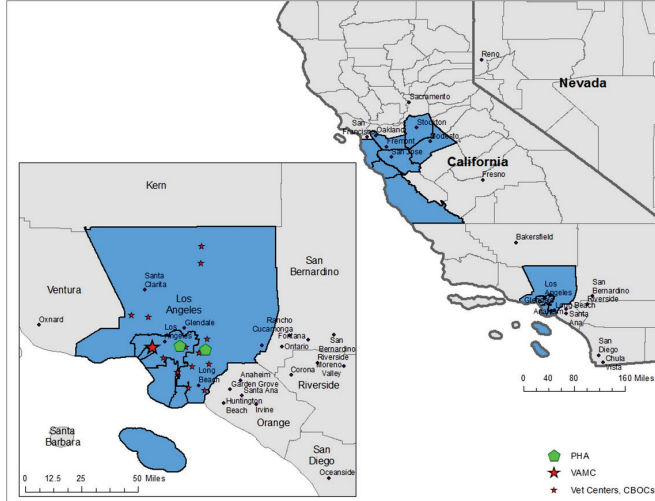
Exhibit 4.8 Houston HUD-VASH Processes



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing.

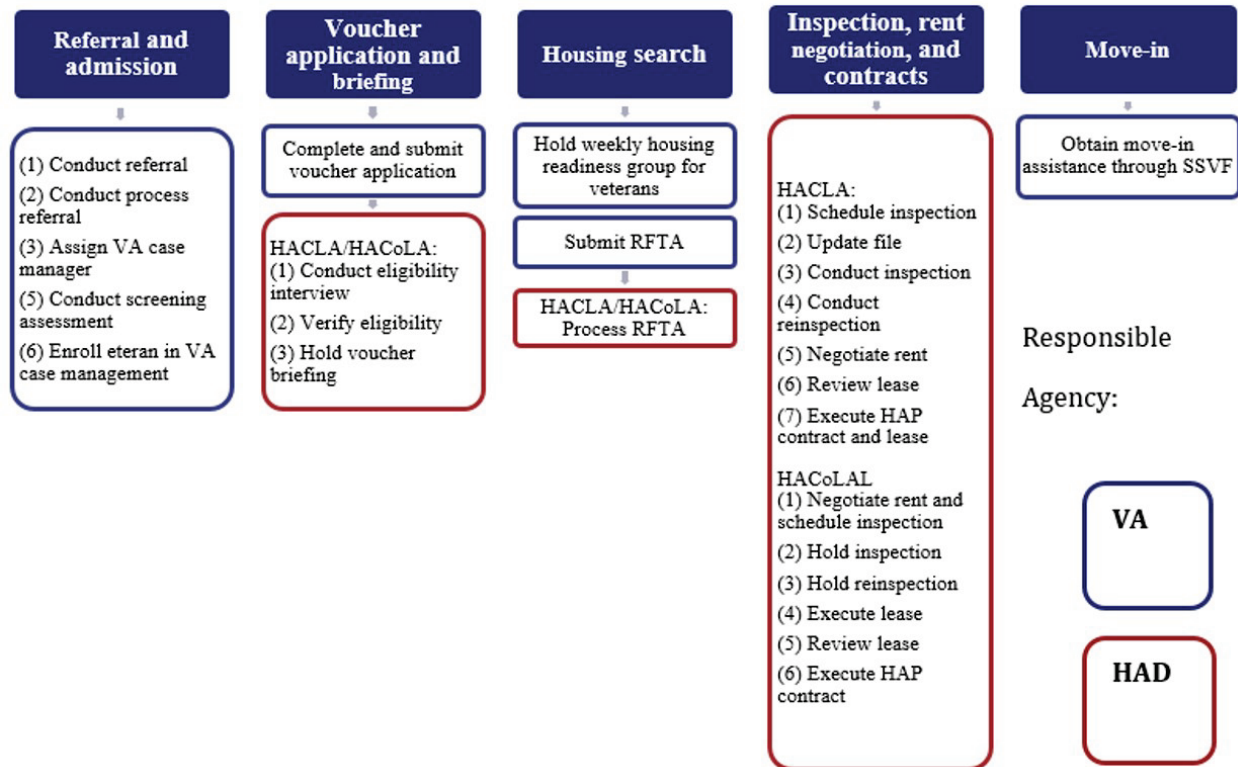
Los Angeles

The Los Angeles HUD-VASH program’s service area includes Greater Los Angeles County, as well as the counties of Ventura, Kern, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. The coordinating VA site is the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System in Los Angeles, California. The HUD-



VASH program has 5,069 vouchers. The majority of vouchers are held by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA, 3,179) and the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA, 1,293). HACLA serves Veterans within the City of Los Angeles. HACoLA serves Veterans anywhere in the county. Exhibit 4.9 outlines the general steps in the Los Angeles HUD-VASH processes, based on data provided by VA case management teams and housing authorities serving the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County.

Exhibit 4.9 Los Angeles HUD-VASH processes



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing.

Palo Alto

The Palo Alto HUD-VASH program operates in the following counties: Alameda, Monterey, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Stanislaus. The coordinating VA site is the VA Palo Alto Health Care System in Palo Alto, California. The HUD-VASH program has 1,478 vouchers. The majority of vouchers are held by the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC, 740) and the Housing Authority of the County of Monterey (HACM, 199). HACSC serves Santa Clara County, including the urban area around San Jose. HACM serves Monterey County, the southernmost part of the study site area, including Salinas and many coastal and rural areas. Exhibit 4.10 outlines the general steps in Palo Alto’s HUD-VASH processes, based on information provided by VA case management teams that serve the entire region and the HACSC and HACM housing authorities.

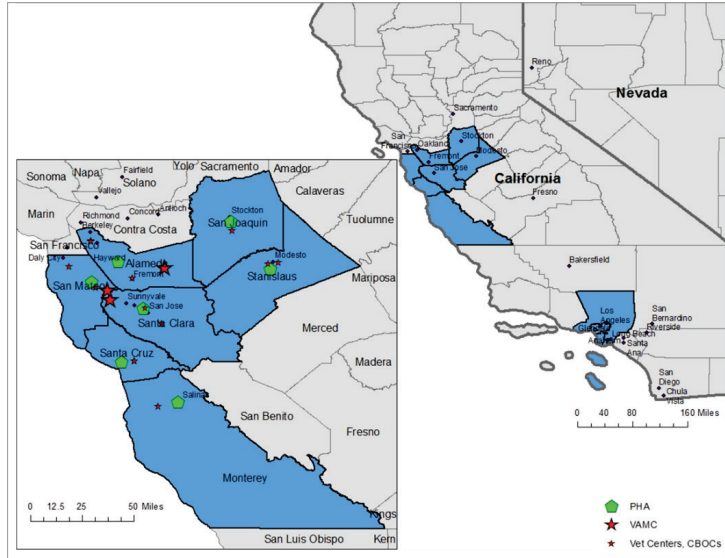
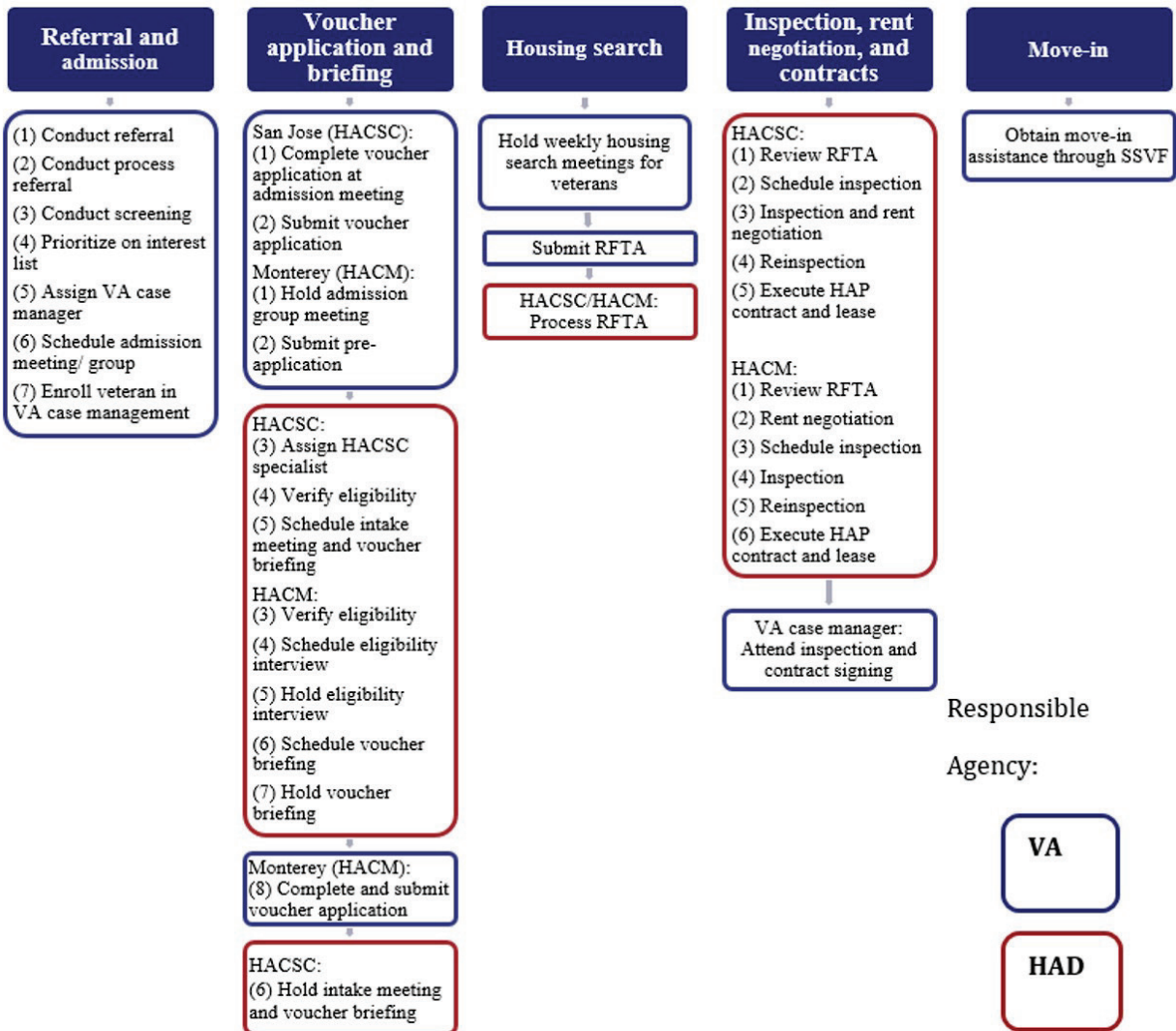


Exhibit 4.10 Palo Alto HUD-VASH Processes



HA = Housing Authority. HACM = Housing Authority of the County of Monterey. HACSC = Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara. HAP = Housing Assistance Payment. HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. RFTA = Request for Tenancy Approval. SSVF = Supportive Services for Veteran Families.

Philadelphia

The Philadelphia HUD-VASH program operates in Philadelphia County and Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and the City of Camden, New Jersey. The coordinating VA site is the Philadelphia VAMC in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The HUD-VASH program has 743 vouchers. The majority of vouchers are held by the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA, 583) and Housing Authority of the City of Camden (HACC, 135). PHA serves Veterans within Philadelphia. HACC serves Veterans within the Camden, New Jersey city limits. Bucks County Housing Authority serves Bucks County. Exhibit 4.11 outlines the general steps in Philadelphia’s HUD-VASH processes, based on information provided by VA case management teams and housing authorities serving Philadelphia and Camden.

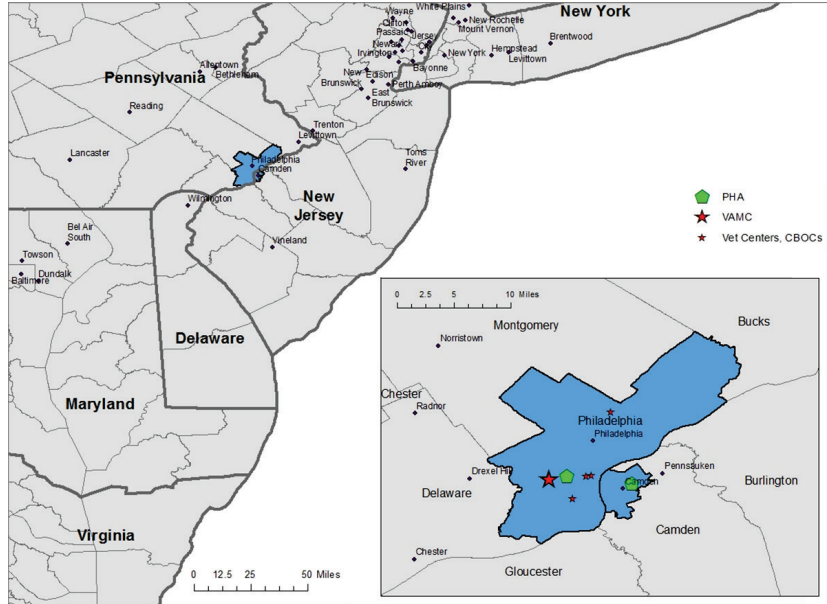
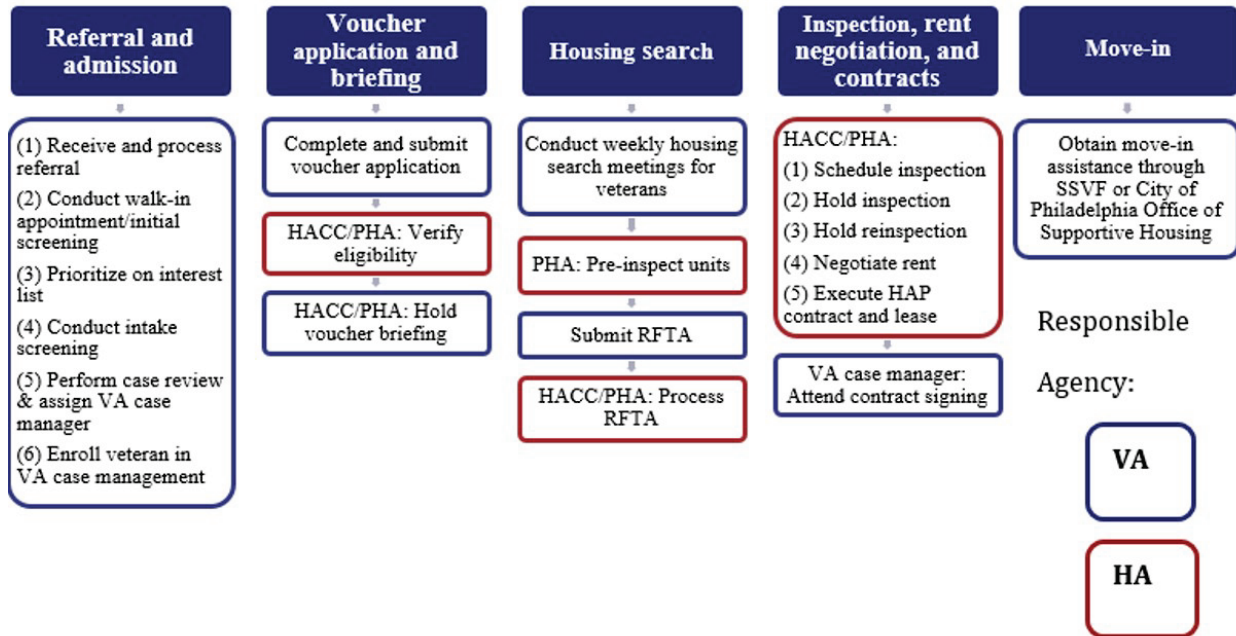


Exhibit 4.11 Philadelphia HUD-VASH Processes



HA = Housing Authority. HACC = Housing Authority of the City of Camden. VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. HAP = Housing Assistance Payment. HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. PHA = Philadelphia Housing Authority. RFTA = Request for Tenancy Approval. SSVF = Supportive Services for Veteran Families.

Summary of Study Site Processes

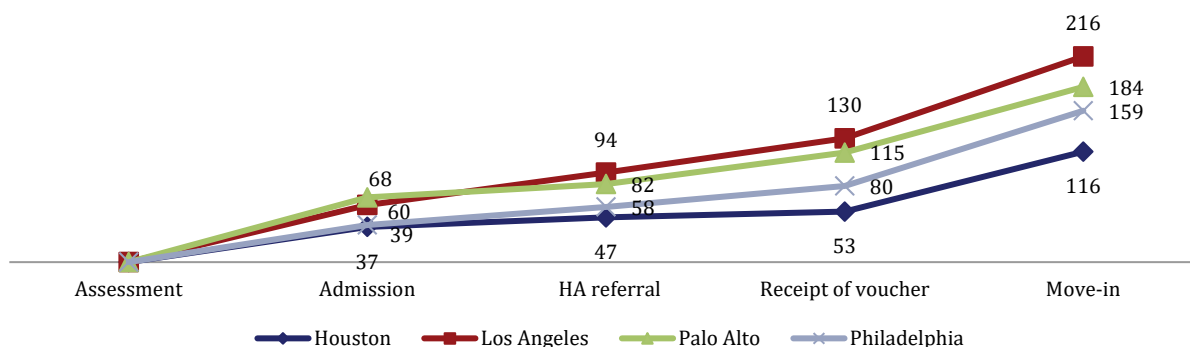
Although each of the study sites followed a similar process for housing Veterans in HUD-VASH—referral and admission; voucher application and briefing; housing search; inspection, rent negotiation, and contracts; move-in—they did so in slightly different ways. For example, the sites processed referrals differently: Los Angeles had two dedicated intake workers, whereas Philadelphia determined Veterans’ participation through a committee-level case review.

Most of the sites provided either weekly housing readiness groups (Los Angeles) or “ride-alongs” (Palo Alto and Philadelphia), in which VA case managers took groups of Veterans on housing searches throughout the community. In Philadelphia, the housing authority maintained a list of preinspected apartments that were available for Veterans with a HUD-VASH voucher. After a Veteran selected a housing unit, VA case managers in Palo Alto and Philadelphia attended the contract signing with the Veteran. One consistent theme across the four study sites was that they each relied heavily on assistance through the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program to obtain move-in essentials, including utility and security deposits, as well as first and last months’ rent.

STUDY SITE OUTCOMES

The following sections describe outcomes for each of the study sites, based on both program- and Veteran-level data. As part of regular program operations, VA case managers track the dates when a Veteran completes each step of the HUD-VASH process, from assessment to move-in. Houston has the fastest housing process: accessing permanent housing typically takes Veterans nearly 4 months (116 days). The process takes about 5 months in Philadelphia (159 days), 6 months in Palo Alto (184 days), and 7 months (216 days) in Los Angeles. Exhibit 4.12 illustrates the average numbers of days Veterans took to move through the program’s steps at each study site between FFY 2009 and 2014.⁹

Exhibit 4.12 HUD-VASH Days to Placement in Permanent Housing, 2009–2014 (N=7,383) | mean



HA = housing authority. HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

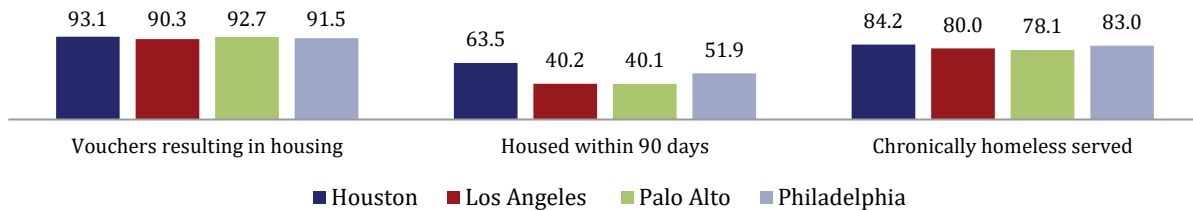
Source: Veterans Health Administration Support Service Center

⁹ Process times, provided by the VA Northeast Program Evaluation Center, are based on 5-year averages for Veterans housed in HUD-VASH between 2009 and 2014.

VA performance measures percent vouchers resulting in housing, percent Veterans housed within 90 days, and percent chronic homeless among those Veterans served—at each of the study sites during FFY 2014 are shown in exhibit 4.13.¹⁰ Most HUD-VASH vouchers at each of the sites resulted in housing. The proportion of Veterans who were housed within 90 days varied by site, with more than one-half being housed within that timeframe in Houston and Philadelphia. In addition, most Veterans entering HUD-VASH were considered chronically homeless.

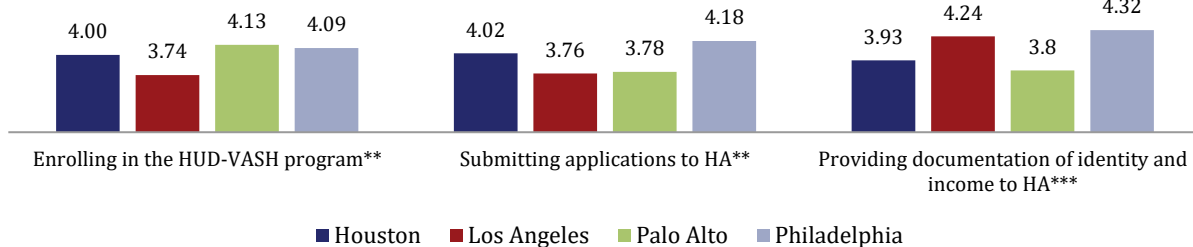
Interviewers asked study respondents about the ease of the HUD-VASH enrollment process, using a five-point scale ranging from very difficult (1) to very easy (5). Study respondents in Palo Alto reported the highest level of ease in enrolling in the program, whereas study respondents in Philadelphia reported the highest level of ease with submitting the application and providing documentation to the housing authority (see exhibit 4.14).

Exhibit 4.13 VA Performance Measures, 2014 | percent



VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
 Source: Veterans Health Administration Support Service Center

Exhibit 4.14 Ease of HUD-VASH Enrollment Process, Study Respondents (N=508) | mean

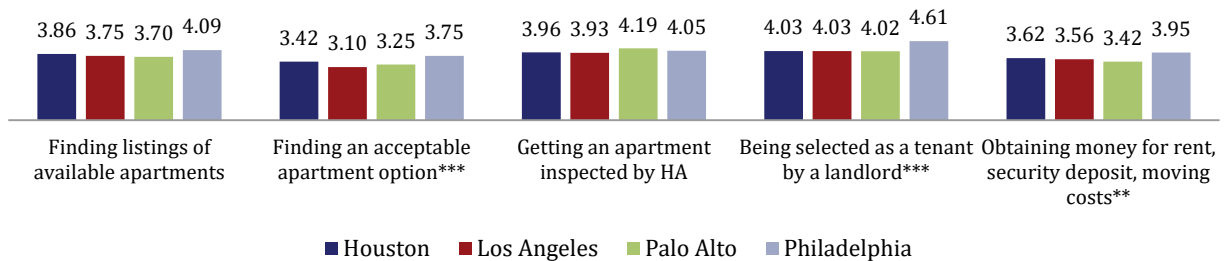


HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.
 Note: Response values ranged from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy). Statistical significance is indicated by**p ≤ 0.05 and ***p ≤ 0.01.
 Source: Veteran Survey

¹⁰ Performance data are from the VA Homeless Programs Scorecard, collected between October 1, 2013 and August 31, 2014.

Interviewers asked study respondents about the ease of the HUD-VASH housing process, using the same five-point scale ranging from very difficult (1) to very easy (5). Veterans in Houston and Philadelphia indicated that finding listings of available apartments and locating an acceptable apartment were easier compared with Veterans in Los Angeles and Palo Alto. Given the difficult housing markets at the California sites, this finding is unsurprising. The ease of getting the apartment inspected by the housing authority was fairly consistent across all sites. Similarly, the ease of being selected as a tenant by a landlord was also fairly consistent across all sites, with the exception of Philadelphia, where Veterans indicated a higher level of ease. This may be related to Philadelphia’s offering preinspected units, demonstrating good relationships with property owners. At all study sites, Veterans described finding an acceptable apartment option and obtaining the money needed for move-in costs as the most difficult steps in the housing process (see exhibit 4.15).

Exhibit 4.15 Ease of HUD-VASH Housing Process, Study Respondents (N=508) | mean



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.
 Note: Response values ranged from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy). Statistical significance is indicated by **p ≤ 0.05 and ***p ≤ 0.01.
 Source: Veteran Survey

SUMMARY

The study sites were diverse in a number of ways. They represented western, southwestern, and northeastern parts of the country. The size of the communities ranged from 1.3 to 7.7 million people and the proportion of Veterans in each community ranged from 3.8 percent to 5.4 percent. Although the poverty rates among the Veteran population were much lower than among the general population, the numbers of homeless Veterans at one point in time ranged from 525 to 3,627 and in 2014 the rates at which they were unsheltered ranged from 5.9 percent to 69.6 percent. Given tight rental markets and high median rents—up to \$1,397 in one community during the study period—accessing housing presented a challenge.

The context in which the HUD-VASH programs operated and the distinct relationships between HUD and VA within each community contributed to variations in the housing processes across sites. Some of those differences were reflected in the amount of time between a Veteran’s assessment and admission into HUD-VASH and moving into a housing unit: among the sites studied, that process ranged from a 5-year average of 116 to 216 days. However, during FFY 2014, three sites placed the majority of Veterans using a HUD-VASH voucher into housing in fewer than 90 days.

During interviews, Veterans provided information about their experiences with their local HUD-VASH program. They expressed varying levels of difficulty and ease in the course of the housing process. For some sites, Veterans found enrolling in the program moderately difficult, whereas in others finding an acceptable housing unit was particularly challenging. Despite those differences, the variability across sites was fairly minimal, which indicates that data are likely to be fairly representative of the HUD-VASH program as a whole.

CHAPTER 5: PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT AND HOUSING PROCESS

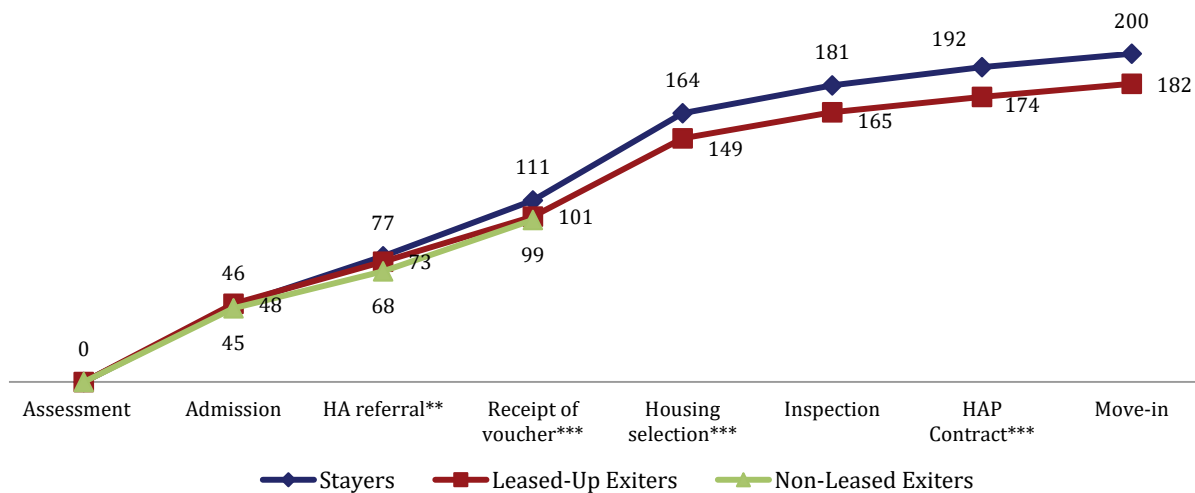
This chapter presents findings related to the housing process, from program assessment through move-in. Findings from interviews with Veterans describe their experiences throughout this process, as well as program facilitators and barriers. A list of variables is included in appendix C. Supporting data tables are included in appendix I.

TIME TO PLACEMENT IN PERMANENT HOUSING

Exhibit 5.1 illustrates the average number of days that HUD-VASH participants at the four study sites moved through each step of the HUD-VASH enrollment and housing process, beginning with Veterans’ initial assessment by the program. After being assessed, the next step for those admitted to the program is admission, followed by referral to the housing authority, receipt of the voucher, selection of housing, inspection of the housing, execution of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract (in which the housing authority promises to pay rent to the landlord), and, finally, move-in.

Veterans moved from assessment to admission in about 1 1/2 months and received their vouchers within 3 months of admission to the program. The largest time differences were between stayers and leased-up exiters; leased-up exiters received their vouchers more than 1 week sooner than stayers and accessed permanent housing about 3 weeks sooner, perhaps because stayers generally entered HUD-VASH before the transition to a Housing First approach.

Exhibit 5.1 Days to Placement in Permanent Housing, HUD-VASH Participants (N=7,383) | mean



HA = housing authority. HAP = Housing Assistance Payment. HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.
 Note: Statistical significance is indicated by **p ≤ 0.05 and ***p ≤ 0.01.
 Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

To identify factors related to the speed at which a Veteran proceeded through the HUD-VASH housing process, the research team conducted a series of regression analyses that modeled the effect of selected Veteran and program characteristics on the duration of the following process stages: (1) program admission to housing authority referral, (2) housing authority referral to the Veteran’s receipt of the HUD-VASH voucher, (3) receipt of the voucher to the Veteran moving into housing, (4) program admission to receipt of voucher, and (5) program admission to move-in. A summary of the model results are presented in exhibit 5.2; the first column lists the variables that were entered into the model, and the subsequent columns summarize the findings for each of the five models, with the outcome of interest indicated at the top of each column. A detailed description of the methods is included in appendix C, and supporting data tables are included in appendix I.

Exhibit 5.2 Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses, HUD-VASH Participants

	Admission to HA Referral N=6,055	HA Referral to Receipt of Voucher N=6,102	Receipt of Voucher to Move-In N=5,308	Admission to Receipt of Voucher N=5,724	Admission to Move-in N=4,882
Study site					
Houston	-	-	-	-	-
Los Angeles	Reference				
Palo Alto	NS	-	-	-	-
Philadelphia	+	-	-	-	-
Study group					
Stayer	Reference				
Leased-up exiter	+	NS	NS	NS	NS
Nonleased exiter	+	+	Not included	+	Not included
Age	+	-	-	NS	NS
Male	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Race					
Black	Reference				
White	NS	NS	-	NS	NS
Other	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Service-connected disability	NS	+	+	NS	NS
Housing First	NS	-	-	-	-
Monthly average VA case management contacts	-	-	-	-	-
Adjusted R2	0.166	0.255	0.090	0.211	0.158

HA = housing authority. HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. NS = not statistically significant.

Note: Statistical significance is indicated by bold font ($p \leq 0.05$).

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System; VA Medical Record

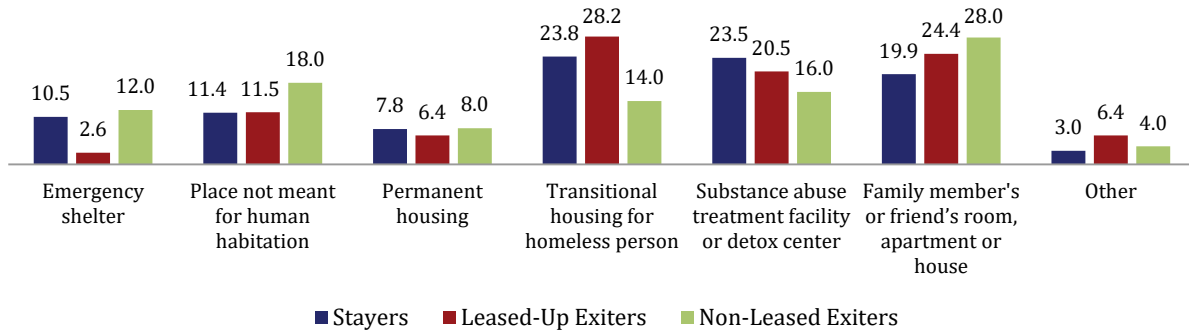
In exhibit 5.2, a “+” sign in a cell indicates that the variable in the first column increased the amount of time it took for Veterans to move through each stage of the housing process. For example, the first model indicates that leased-up exiters took longer to to move from program admission to referral to the housing authority. Similarly, a “-” sign indicates that the variable in the first column decreased the amount of time it took to move through each step of the housing process. For example, each additional VA case management contact was associated with decrease in time between admission and referral to the housing authority.

Across each of the five process stages assessed, more frequent VA case management was related to more rapid housing. Although the results of the regressions show that, controlling for site and other characteristics, Veterans who ultimately exited the program needed more days than stayers needed to proceed through the housing process, the effect sizes were minimal. Generally, older age increased the pace at which a Veteran moved through the housing process again, with very small effect sizes. However, Veterans admitted to HUD-VASH after the transition to a Housing First approach required 7.2 to 13.6 fewer days to move through the housing process once they received a HUD-VASH voucher.

LIVING SITUATION PRIOR TO HUD-VASH AND SOURCE OF REFERRAL

Study respondents reported during surveys that they entered the HUD-VASH program from a variety of living situations. Veterans who ultimately accessed housing most frequently stayed in a supported environment before receiving their vouchers: nearly one-half of stayers and leased-up exiters were living in either transitional housing or a substance abuse treatment facility or detox center. Nonleased exiters most frequently received their voucher while living with a family member or friend; nearly one-third received their vouchers while staying at a place not meant for human habitation or at an emergency shelter (see exhibit 5.3).

Exhibit 5.3 Living Situation at Voucher Receipt, Study Respondents (N=489) | percent

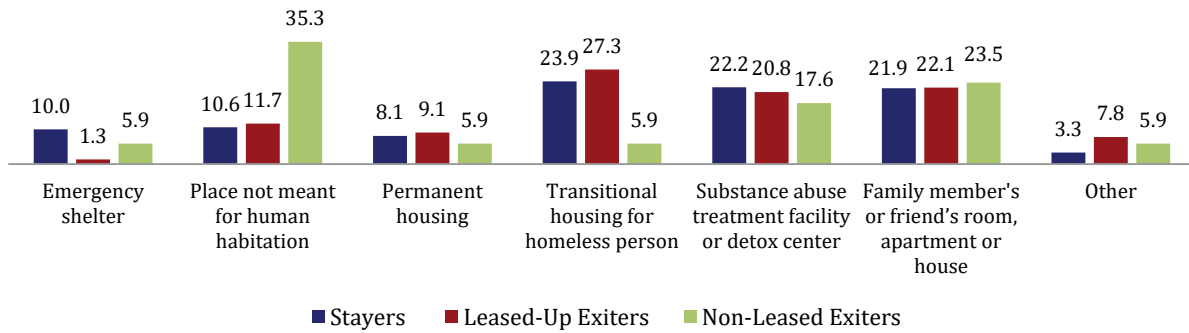


Note: N includes 361 stayers, 78 leased-up exiters, and 50 nonleased exiters.
 Source: Veteran Survey

Respondents also indicated where they were living at the time they selected their housing unit. The distribution of types of living situation was fairly consistent between voucher receipt and apartment selection for stayers and leased-up exiters. One-third of nonleased exiters selected an apartment but did not ultimately move in; among those Veterans, 35.3 percent were living in places not meant for human habitation (see exhibit 5.4).

During qualitative interviews, respondents reflected on their experiences with homelessness, including their housing situation immediately before entering the HUD-VASH program. Many Veterans described a complex variety of unstable housing arrangements. One Veteran described the living situation as, “different people’s couches, floors, sleeping bags, cars” (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles), and another related “going from pillow to post and it was very frustrating” (Leased-up exiter—Houston). The housing situations that Veterans described most frequently during qualitative interviews are listed in exhibit 5.5.

Exhibit 5.4 Living Situation at Apartment Selection, Study Respondents (N=454) | percent



Note: N includes 360 stayers, 77 leased-up exiters, and 17 nonleased exiters.
 Source: Veteran Survey

Exhibit 5.5 Living Situations, Qualitative Respondents

Car, recreational vehicle, or trailer	Rented room
Family member's room, apartment, or house	Street or other place not meant for human habitation
Friend's room, apartment, or house	VA hospital, shelter, or program
Non-VA shelter or program	

Source: Veteran Interview

Stayers and leased-up exiters most commonly described staying in non-VA shelters, transitional housing programs, or treatment facilities before entering HUD-VASH.

I came through a shelter and HUD-VASH was mentioned and everything. And I was all for it because I wanted to get out of there and I wanted to be on my own. And I wanted to have a home. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

I first learned about the HUD-VASH program when I was a resident at a homeless Veterans' rehabilitation program about maybe 3 months into the program. They talked to me about a new program starting up. It was a pilot program and it was to help Veterans who had homelessness issues to get help, specifically for Veterans that had families. I had a wife and three kids and they asked me to apply. I basically came to the program so I can see a future. I knew that I had a problem with drugs and alcohol. It was a start for me to like look at what we can do in the program and that there is a path there I can see where, hopefully, combined with the program and completing the program, going and getting supportive housing, that I will be able to connect with my family. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

Veterans in each study group, particularly nonleased exiters, discussed staying with family members or friends. Often Veterans would remain for a time with one person and then move in with another when they felt that they had overstayed their welcome, which they reported was a stressful experience.

I was staying at, well, different places. Like my son was at my friend's house. You know, she allowed him to stay there. But because she was there with her husband and I have to like, you know, go there—I would sleep there at night and then leave during the day, pick up my son, you know, drop him to her. But then I could not really be there. So it was like maybe I had three or four friends [where] I would sleep. (Nonleased exiter—Philadelphia)

I stayed in [my son's] house until about June. Then from June to maybe July, I stayed at that girl's house. Then I moved back to his house. I came back and I was sleeping on the floor again. I have to stay out all the time. People do not realize, but it wears you. I am serious—it wears you. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

Compared with the other study groups, nonleased exiters far more frequently described staying in cars or on the street or other places not meant for human habitation. One respondent described living in a storage unit, and other Veterans spoke about living in tents or public places. Those individuals moved around frequently and often felt unsafe and uncomfortable, although some of them said that they believed their military training helped them adapt to those situations.

Depressed, pissed off that there was no other help. I couldn't live in my car. I didn't have a car at that time. I was living in a tent with a motorcycle. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

Having been in the service, I didn't have no problem sleeping on the street. You know how to camp out. You have two or three other people there with you that you trust, and no problem. I knew that it's a dollar a day to go take my showers and everything at the Y. I do all of that. I knew where to go get a free meal if I had to. I might not like it, but if I ran out of money, I could always go get a free meal and that kind of thing. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

Interviewers also asked qualitative respondents how they first learned about the HUD-VASH program; the most common referral sources are listed in exhibit 5.6.

Exhibit 5.6 Exposure to Program/Referral Source, Qualitative Respondents

Doctors or other medical personnel	VA hospital, shelter, or program
Family or friend	Veterans
Non-VA shelter or program	

Source: Veteran Interview

VA was the initial point of entry to HUD-VASH for many Veterans of every study group, through drug and alcohol rehabilitation, mental health, and domiciliary or other programs that shelter Veterans experiencing homelessness, as well as Veterans service organizations and VA outreach.

I first learned about it when I was in prison. And, the unit I was on, once a month they had a VA group that would meet. And we would have, every now and then, speakers from the VA hospital here, and different networks would come down there and give us information and give us books and help us file disabilities and all that. And when they gave us the books, it was a section in there about HUD-VASH program, and when I got out, I looked into it. (Stayer—Houston)

I learned about the program through the information book that the VA provides every year. I looked through there and there was something about homeless Veterans. They had a phone number and I called and they directed me to here. I spoke to a counselor. (Nonleased exiter—Philadelphia)

Veterans in each study group learned about HUD-VASH through case managers and other staff at rehabilitation programs, shelters, or other assistance programs that were outside the VA.

I was in the treatment facility. A case manager, when I did the intake, they had me down as a regular. I was getting ready to graduate the program, and I was thinking about housing and we had a one-on-one, and he said, well you know, being that you're a Veteran, Obama signed a bill for Veterans. I hadn't thought any more about it until he brought it to my attention. And he happened to know one of the guys who was running the VA program and got me in. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

All study groups, but particularly leased and nonleased exiters, cited other Veterans as initially informing them about HUD-VASH, often at a VA hospital or at shelters.

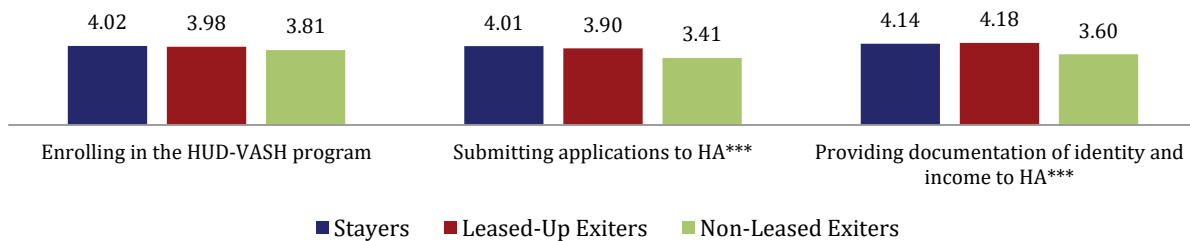
I was with a group of Veterans, talking about help, looking for places and how they had a process for Veterans where you could get a house really quickly if you did not have your own house. I interrupted and asked him how you do it. He said they have this VASH program where you can get—I knew of a program, but it was not for Veterans, if you go down to housing. I heard that takes 5 years. It is a 5-year wait on your voucher. Then he said they have VASH, where you can get your voucher in 2 or 3 months, for Veterans in this program. You have to sign up. I said all right. They gave me the number and I went and called. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

HUD-VASH ENROLLMENT PROCESS

Ease of HUD-VASH Enrollment Process

Interviewers asked study respondents about the ease of HUD-VASH enrollment—using a five-point scale ranging from very difficult (1) to very easy (5)—and two steps along the housing process: submitting the voucher application to the housing authority and providing sufficient documentation. Stayers reported more ease with the enrollment process, whereas nonleased exiters reported the most difficulty. Leased-up exiters responded similarly to stayers (see exhibit 5.7).

Exhibit 5.7 Ease of HUD-VASH Enrollment Process, Study Respondents (N=508) | mean



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Note: Response values ranged from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy). Statistical significance is indicated by ***p ≤ 0.01.

Source: Veteran Survey

When asked about the enrollment process, qualitative respondents described meetings with their VA case manager or other HUD-VASH staff; undergoing background, income, and drug screenings; participating in tuberculosis testing, vaccinations, or receiving other preventative services; filling out paperwork; and providing required documentation. Required documentation included government identification, Department of Defense Form 214 (DD-214, military discharge status), proof of income, and identifying information about their families, if applicable. Veterans often enrolled during a group orientation or through an individual meeting with a HUD-VASH staff member. Exhibit 5.8 lists the main themes Veterans discussed regarding the enrollment process.

Exhibit 5.8 Enrollment Process Experiences, Qualitative Respondents

Difficult	Homeless status	Timeline was longer than expected
Easy	Income requirement	Timeline was shorter or as long as expected
Facilitation by staff	Support from staff	

Source: Veteran Interview

Although Veterans did not generally describe program eligibility as a barrier to enrolling in the program, some did express concerns regarding requirements related to their homeless status and income. Many participants referenced the term chronic homelessness and their understanding that eligibility for the HUD-VASH program depended on meeting certain criteria; however, they reported confusion and dissatisfaction with the concept.

When I first spoke to them, I was very, very disappointed because I am like, well, how are you going to tell me that I do not qualify because I have not been homeless long enough? Like, I have a child that is not stable anywhere. So I was really drawn back—very, very disappointed that the criteria that you have—that is what I thought. I mean, I do not know what is that criteria, but the way I felt was that you have to be homeless for a certain period of time to qualify to get into this program. I do not know how that works. (Nonleased exiter—Philadelphia)

You have to know what to put down on the application in order to be selected. You can't just put down and say I was homeless one time—they want people who have been homeless multiple times; they think they are more needy than somebody that has been homeless once. And the person that has been homeless only one time probably has more resources to fall back on in order to find housing instead of a—if you go through the rehab it is usually because of drinking or drugs or both or prescription drugs or all three or whatever that made you homeless. You know they want a cause on why you became homeless and then family would come first and then you had to have been homeless more than at least five times. They want somebody that has been through it more than a couple of times. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

I applied for it because I was homeless and sleeping in my car and living in a homeless shelter. I was turned down because I was sleeping on the couch at a friend's house. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

They say I'm not chronically homeless yet. I have to start all over. Chronically homeless to the VA is that I got to be a year or more in the streets. Living in the streets, that's chronic

homeless. I said, how can I not be chronic? I can't even walk. I'm in a wheelchair. I'm a homeless disabled Veteran that can't walk. I'm in a wheelchair. I'm sleeping in the back shed of my mother's house. I don't have no running water, no electricity. I have no eating quarters and they told me that I'm not chronic homeless because I haven't been homeless long enough because I just had me a place about 5 months. So, now I'm 5 months going into chronic homeless[ness]. So, I got to do another 8 months for them to even see about letting me on the list. It's crazy. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

If you don't have any source of income they don't even want to talk to you; you need to have some kind of income. (Stayer—Houston)

The majority of qualitative respondents in every study group described the enrollment process as easy and taking about as long as or less time than they expected. Veterans often attributed the ease of enrollment to the provision of information about the program, checklists, or other materials. Respondents who found the process easier to navigate noted general support from VA case managers or housing authority staff, as well as access to required application documents and group orientations to complete the application. For some respondents, the timeframe for enrollment was shorter because they were involved in other VA programs that facilitated their entry into HUD-VASH, their VA case manager was able to fast-track their application, or they were identified as having a higher need for housing than other Veterans.

The application did not take but really 3 weeks—went down, met with the people, and they gave me a drug test, TB shot, then I came back the next week and I had to bring source of income, IDs, and DD-214s. I had to bring that back, and once I brought that, they sent me to Building 121. I went in there for orientation, and then a few days later they sent us to housing to pick up our vouchers. It was real quick. (Stayer—Houston)

The process is pretty smooth, because we had workers here at the VA that were knowledgeable of the application. They had been through the process hundreds of times, so it made it a lot easier to get through the application process. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

I went over to the housing authority and I filled out the paperwork. And then my counselor, she kind of intervened and she kind of rushed it and told people that I was going to be out in the streets. And after that, I think it was just a little more time, you know, that it took for me to get in. So it was pretty fast, I can just say that. (Stayer—Houston)

I feel it went fairly quickly because of my level of homelessness. From what I understand about the program, that is pretty much how it works—your level of homelessness sets up where you're at on a waiting list basically. I think because of my level of homelessness at the time, living at the Veterans Transition Center, I was at high risk and so they offered me a first voucher. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

Some respondents described difficulties with the enrollment process, including lack of assistance from staff, trouble gathering necessary documentation or negotiating their goals and program qualifications, complex processes, initial rejections, lost paperwork, travel to VA or housing authority offices, and waiting. They identified specific steps in the enrollment process that were problematic: reapplication following an initial rejection, long waiting lists for limited vouchers, lack of follow-up, VA case managers who moved too slowly, or not having an assigned VA case manager.

While you are going through the documentation process and completing all the forms for the program, you bring a copy of your compensation letter, which shows how much you receive per month because of your service-connected disabilities. Once you take them, it has a dollar amount. Mine was \$900. Based on what I received, they do some kind of percentage calculation and it breaks down the percentage that you will pay, based on the type of home you stay in, whether it is an apartment or renting a condo. It shows how much you will pay per type of home, and how much you are responsible for. Because of my responsibilities to my kids, I did not have enough to cover it. (Nonleased exiter—Houston)

It was kind of disarming because I spent a lot of time to gather up all this information and I just got everything that they told me was required and that took some time. When I brought it in I had everything I needed, everything. It was processed. I want to say it was processed almost in 1 day. When I left the office, I had a date to report to the house mentor, which was maybe 3 or 4 days away. When I asked about the voucher, I got a call from my case manager who said that my information had been lost. I was really distraught about that. For one thing, I wonder where could my information be? As far as I knew, it could be anywhere. But at the same time, I did not want to start pointing fingers, because I did not know what it was. I felt like everyone who I came in contact with was genuinely trying to do their jobs. I felt kind of let down because I felt like I fell through the cracks. That does happen, and I just hated that it happened to me. (Nonleased exiter—Houston)

You know, you can slip through the cracks, or, maybe, I mean, I do know you guys have so much workload, because I kind of look around. I think somebody just says, “Oh,” you know. I have to ask myself, how many people get caught up like that? Here I am waiting by the phone and the phone never rings and someone says, “Hey, I called this guy and left him a message.” What are you talking about, you know? I am sitting here almost 9 months looking at my phone every day. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

It took her forever to get that paperwork done. If they look at the computer from the time that she picked me up as a client until the time that she did the paperwork to get the ball rolling for anything, they will see a huge gap there. And I had nothing to do; I had time on my hands. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

I eventually got it. Took some time because they dropped the ball. They did not assign me a case manager, so it wound up taking me close to a year and a half to get into VASH. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

This is how it was explained to me how HUD-VASH works. They get so many vouchers where they are to be distributed to homeless Veterans, Veterans that are in the recovering process. And once those vouchers run out there is a wait period and no one seems to know how long that wait period will be. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

Also of note, nonleased exiters more frequently described staff facilitating their enrollment or providing other support:

[My VA case manager] was checking on me to make sure that I was all right and I was seeking assistance from the VA, I guess. When I left [the city], they didn't take it away. She gave me, I guess, a second shot because I was on the 7th floor and when I was checking out she inquired about where I would be staying and then I told her and I didn't go—she called because I told her she could. That was my agreement with her, that I would go

somewhere so that she knew that I was all right and that I was trying to stay out of trouble, and I gave her the information and she called and I wasn't there. So then they took the voucher. (Nonleased exiter—Philadelphia)

Program Orientation

Respondents across each study group expressed overall positive feelings about the HUD-VASH orientation, which took place at the local housing authority or was facilitated by housing authority staff at the VA. Respondents also recalled orientations hosted by VA staff either in groups or in one-on-one meetings at VA locations. They noted that orientations were opportunities for HUD-VASH staff to provide Veterans with programmatic guidelines, a description of the process to receive a voucher, and tips for finding qualified housing. Many Veterans reported being generally pleased with the orientation, usually agreeing that it was “helpful” and that the information was adequately explained, either at the orientation or in continued interactions with HUD-VASH staff.

They had a lot of good information and a lot of knowledgeable information and resources. The people there at the housing authority, the ones that presented the orientation, they were very helpful. They answered a lot of questions. They gave out a lot of information. I was very pleased with it. (Nonleased-exiter—Palo Alto)

[They had classes] to fill out the paperwork, for them to tell you what the dos and do nots are, everything—what areas to pick, when to go shopping for a place; make sure you have schools, markets, or whatever you need—to make sure you look for that. They were showing us how to budget your money and how to pay your bills and all that. Everything you can think of, they came out and they took care of the homework. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

Several respondents indicated that they did not attend an orientation. Other respondents, especially exiters, noted dissatisfaction with the information provided, explaining that some facilitators were not fully versed in how HUD-VASH works, the information was common knowledge or not particularly useful, or they had personal difficulties that hindered their ability to receive the information in the orientation setting. The most common negative orientation experiences that Veterans described are shown in exhibit 5.9.

Exhibit 5.9 Negative Program Orientation Experiences, Qualitative Respondents

Did not attend orientation	Overall negative experience
Dissatisfaction with information provided	Personal difficulties
Information wasn't useful	

Source: Veteran Interview

With the way they did it, they went a little too fast in showing people. He was going through the thing, rushing it. He did not really take the time to explain things. It was put your name here, put this here and put that there. I really did not learn anything. I just did as he told us. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

[The orientation is] not on a case-by-case basis. They're generalizing the application process in order to shorten it down for them, but then when the individual goes through the housing authority, that individual is like, "Okay, why are you lying on this paperwork? Why isn't this filled out properly?" and it was like, we got helped. But you won't see our

caseworkers there vouching for me like, “Okay, I’m sorry. I filled this out.” No, they’re all the way over here. They don’t answer their phones when you’re calling from that office. So, it is pointless. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

The fact that, how to go about asking the proper questions being in the program, because when you are new to something, you do not really know what questions to ask. I think that should be in VASH. I think there should be like a checklist or like a formatted list.

Questions that you should ask the property owner and get responses and feedback for. What do you do in this situation, what is your rent, and so on and so forth. I think if they just created like a mini-questionnaire [or] a checklist. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

It was murky. It did not really go too smoothly because I did not understand. It is hard for me to take in things. That is just on my part. The case manager explained everything that day as well as it is the same right now. (Stayer—Houston)

Program Rules and Regulations

Exhibit 5.10 lists the most common rules that Veterans understood they needed to follow to remain in HUD-VASH. Because qualitative respondents entered the program between 2008 and 2014, experiences with program rules and regulations may reflect policies both before and after Housing First implementation.

Exhibit 5.10 Program Rules and Regulations, Qualitative Respondents

Class or group therapy attendance	Sobriety
Concern over requirements	VA case management compliance
No problem with rules	

VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
 Source: Veteran Interview

Veterans discussed sobriety as a requirement to enroll and remain in HUD-VASH, and several respondents also noted that they were required to take a urinalysis.

No drinking, no partying, no dope, no this, and no that, you know, and that at any time the social worker could come through and check out your living quarter[s]/ living situation. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

They check [your urine]. It is random, though. They might not check you for a year. They might not check you for 2 years, you know, but it is at random. They do not tell you when they are going to do it. But they do have the right to check to make sure you are staying sober. (Stayer—Houston)

However, Veterans felt that if they were to relapse, they could receive assistance through the program without automatically losing their housing.

If you relapsed and started using again and—I didn’t think you would be automatically disqualified. The hope is that the program would help me get back into what I needed to take care of if I relapsed. Lucky for me, I have been over 6 years clean now, so I didn’t have that issue. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

Respondents described requirements to comply with VA case management to remain in HUD-VASH, such as attending classes (for example, budgeting) or group therapy sessions to support abstinence.

Then we had group. I think it was twice a week or even once a week, every week, and we had to attend meetings. The rules were very strict. You had to be participating in a program in order to get a voucher. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

The rules and regulations hindered me at the time when I first entered because I was working contract work. That meant I had to take a car and sometimes I had to go out to see, or I had to go to other locations to work. It was difficult meeting up with my case manager, which was a requirement to stay in the program, because of my work schedule. (Nonleased exiter—Houston)

Learning about the program was one thing, but it seemed a little bit intrusive on anybody’s life. It was like mandatory once every 2 week visits or you couldn’t leave town for over a month or over whatever. I’m like, my parents live in North Carolina. I am going to be gone for over 2 weeks. And if we got to sign off on that permission to do this. (Nonleased exiter—Philadelphia)

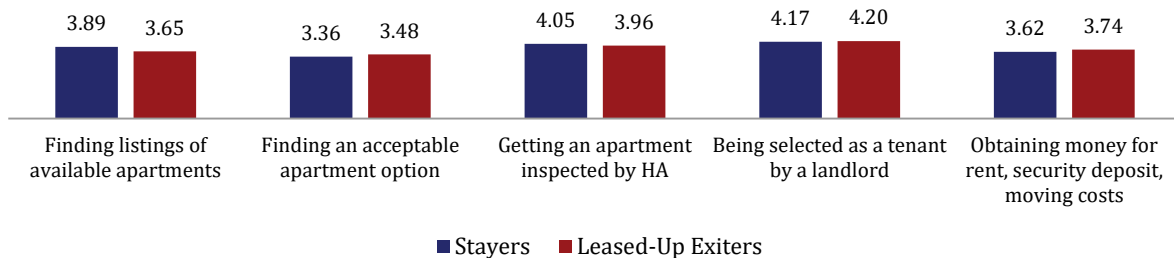
What I was just saying about that, somebody keeping their eye on you like a child making you feel like—I mean this ain’t really mine. Somebody like always checking up on you and stuff like that. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

HUD-VASH HOUSING PROCESS

Ease of HUD-VASH Housing Process

Stayers and leased-up exiter respondents rated the ease of the housing process, including accessing lists of available apartments, selecting an apartment and securing resources, and moving into housing. Stayers and leased-up exiters described the difficulty of this process with little variation. However, finding an acceptable apartment and obtaining assistance with rent, security deposits, and moving costs were more challenging than other steps (see exhibit 5.11).

Exhibit 5.11 Ease of HUD-VASH Housing Process, Study Respondents (N=508) | mean



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Note: Response values ranged from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy).

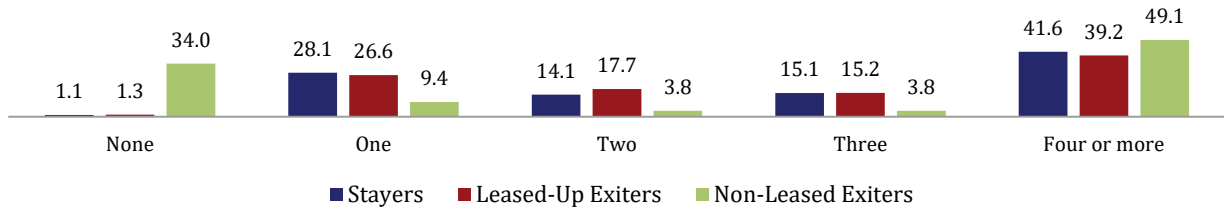
Source: Veteran Survey

Although nonleased exiters left HUD-VASH before they moved into permanent housing, almost two-thirds (61.8 percent) found a listing of available apartment options, fewer than one-half (43.1 percent) found an acceptable apartment option, and nearly one-quarter (22.4 percent) obtained resources for move-in. Far fewer nonleased exiters indicated that a landlord selected them as a tenant (15.5 percent) or that the apartment was inspected (8.6 percent) before exiting the program.

Housing Selection

Exhibit 5.12 displays the number of apartments that study respondents visited during their housing search. The majority visited one or more apartments, demonstrating some level of choice in selecting a unit. More than one-fourth of stayers and leased-up exiters visited only one unit, but two-fifths visited four or more, which may indicate a high degree of choice in housing. However, although the majority of leased-up respondents viewed one or more units, a substantial portion (14.1 percent of stayers and 17.9 percent of leased-up exiters) stated that they did not have a choice in selecting their apartment. Additionally, both stayers and leased-up exiters indicated that approximately seven out of 10 apartments were acceptable (70.9 percent for stayers and 68.4 percent for leased-up exiters), possibly accounting for the large number of units they visited.

Exhibit 5.12 Number of Apartments Visited During Housing Search, Study Respondents (N=502) | percent



Note: N includes 370 stayers, 79 leased-up exiters, and 53 nonleased exiters.
 Source: Veteran Survey

About one-third of nonleased exiters indicated that they did not visit any units, probably because they exited the program before starting the housing search. However, almost one-half of nonleased exiters visited four or more units, 10 percent more than the other study groups. Nonleased exiters also indicated that only 42.2 percent of the apartments they visited were acceptable, almost 40 percent less than the proportion of acceptable apartments visited by the other study groups. These data suggest that nonleased Veterans either exited before beginning the housing search or viewed many units but had difficulty finding one that was acceptable.

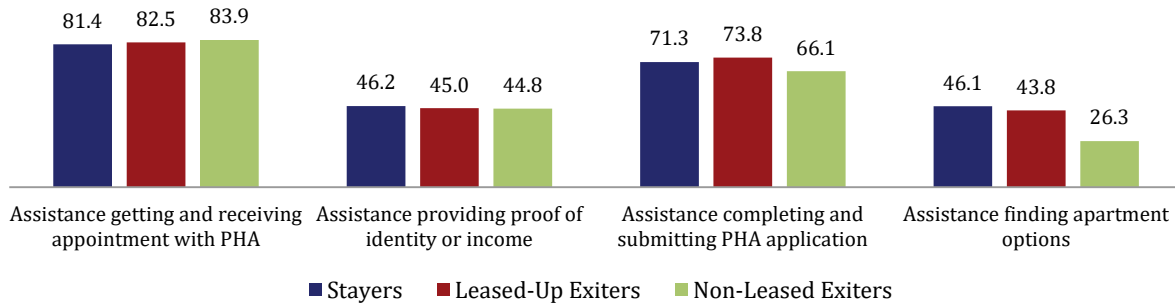
Both stayers and leased-up exiters cited location or neighborhood as the main reason for their choice of apartment (63.4 percent of stayers and 65.4 percent of leased-up exiters). The majority of Veterans indicated that they were “very comfortable” during their first few nights in their new apartment (58.4 percent of stayers and 65.0 percent of leased-up exiters), and few said that they were “not comfortable” (10.3 percent of stayers and 12.5 percent of leased-up exiters).

Services Received During Housing Process

Although the majority of respondents reported receiving assistance getting an appointment with the housing authority, less than one-half had help providing the required documentation for the HUD-VASH application. Stayers and leased-up exiters more frequently indicated that they received (1) assistance completing and submitting the HUD-VASH application and (2) support finding housing options compared with nonleased exiters (see exhibit 5.13).

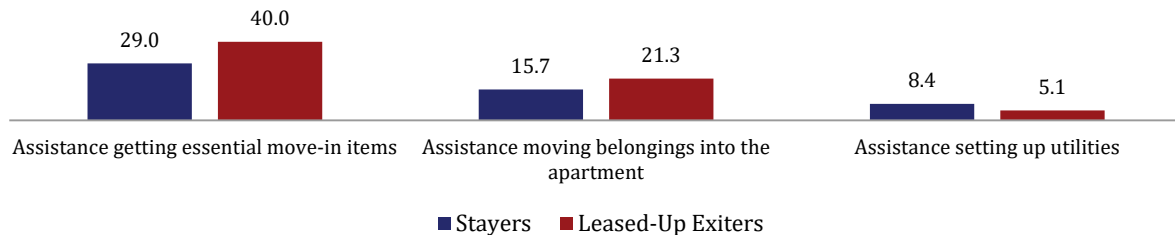
During the move-in process, leased-up exiters reported that they received more support than stayers obtaining items essential to move-in and moving belongings into their new apartments (see exhibit 5.14).

Exhibit 5.13 Services Received During Housing Process, Study Respondents (N~508) | percent



Note: N includes 370 stayers, 80 leased-up exiters, and 58 nonleased exiters.
Source: Veteran Survey

Exhibit 5.14 Services Received During Move-in, Study Respondents (N=458) | percent



Note: N includes 369 stayers and 89 leased-up exiters.
Source: Veteran Survey

FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

Veterans described a variety of experiences related to the HUD-VASH housing process, such as feeling supported and guided through the process, as well as encountering barriers that were not mitigated by the program, including the amount of time required to find a unit and the pressure to act quickly because housing stock was limited. Many Veterans spoke about the effect of their

credit and incarceration histories on their house-hunting experiences, as well as having limited funds for move-in costs. Other Veterans described housing that was located too close to “high crime” neighborhoods or drug dealers. Many respondents related how prospective property owners “stood them up” or how they felt judged on their appearance. Some, such as Veterans who used wheelchairs, spoke about a limited inventory of accessible housing. Exhibit 5.15 lists the most common facilitators and barriers to housing described by Veterans.

Exhibit 5.15 HUD-VASH Housing Process Facilitators and Barriers, Qualitative Respondents

Facilitators	Barriers
Ability to meet requirements	Conflict with property owners/managers
Flexible property owners	Criminal background
Housing list or resources for housing search	Financial issues
Move-in assistance	Inspection issues
Quick move-in process	Limited housing options
Supportive VA case manager	Limited time for housing search
	Medical condition or mental or behavioral health conditions
	Transportation
	Undesirable neighborhoods
	Unsuitable housing

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: Veteran Interview

Facilitators

Ability To Meet Requirements

Veterans described requirements imposed by both the program (for example, property inspections) and property owners (for example, background checks). The majority of stayers and leased-up exiters indicated that they had no problems with requirements; fewer nonleased exiters stated that the requirements were not a problem.

Basically, the place that I lived, they were used to dealing with vouchers and they had already had a rapport with [the housing authority]. So they called up and set up the inspection and everything. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

The housing authority came out and did their inspection, and it seemed to have been pretty expeditious. It was pretty thorough, and I do not remember any problem at all. (Stayer—Houston)

Flexible Property Owners

Respondents, particularly stayers, described accommodating property owners, those who gave them “a chance” despite background characteristics, such as criminal histories, and waived screening processes or application fees.

[The property owner] was really nice. We skipped all of the screening processes. We talked for a while. I guess she liked my answers and the way I presented myself. We agreed, just like that, without any paperwork. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

[My landlord] is also a Veteran. And he knows about HUD-VASH. So he was very cooperative. He waited the length of time before he was paid for the move-in deposit. And, like I said, it was trying for me because I was wondering if I was going to get kicked out or not, but it [came] through. He was happy. And to this day, he is more than happy.
(Stayer—Palo Alto)

I was lucky in the respect that the landlord used to be where we were at. There are a lot of pro-Veteran landlords. But corporate housing—places that are owned by corporations—they don't allow their managers to do that. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

Housing List/Resources For Housing Search

Respondents in each study group found housing lists and similar resources helpful in their housing search, particularly those that identified properties that accepted tenants with criminal backgrounds.

The biggest help was getting a list that was compiled by the VASH program of various housing that was available. And it somewhat broke it down to the extent of whether they accepted felonies, whether they required this deposit or whatever deposit, or whatever of the few dos and do nots. (Stayer—Houston)

It was about the second or third ride-along; it didn't take very long, because [of] the guys that was driving and having the list of where the apartments were, they were great.
(Stayer—Palo Alto)

Move-in Assistance

Although a significant proportion of study respondents reported insufficient move-in assistance, a number of qualitative respondents—most frequently leased-up exiters—described receiving assistance in obtaining money for move-in costs or in moving into their new housing. Veterans indicated that they received financial assistance from VA programs, as well as outside organizations such as the Salvation Army. HUD-VASH staff often assisted Veterans in identifying resources and helping them move.

Any kind of purchasing, I went to one of the places where they actually donate furniture, and where people give to for this. It was nice stuff. It wasn't anything that you wouldn't want to get if you already wanted furniture at your apartment, but me, myself, I'm kind of crippled in the hands, and I don't want to be lugging any heavy stuff around. I was happy. I made it comfortable once I got into [it]. I made it into what I wanted it to be, so it was all right. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

You have to pay your own deposit, but there are organizations out there that will help pay your deposits for your rent. If you need electricity, they got a lot of organizations out here that you can go to, and they will pay your [bill] for 6 months. (Stayer—Houston)

Quick Move-In Process

Both stayers and leased-up exiters noted that they were able to move into their housing much more quickly than they expected.

When they first came and inspected the apartment when it was empty, they inspected it and got the paperwork going. It was done. It was over with. They told us when we could move in there. It was timely. They said the 1st of April we could move in. It was like that. All that was done within a 2-week period. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

The process went quickly. I got there and lived there. She handled all the paperwork. She filled it all out. I guess she knew people down there at Section 8. She has been doing it. She did all the paperwork. The next thing you know, she said I could move in a week. She gave me the keys. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

Supportive VA Case Manager

Veterans in every study group described VA case managers who supported or advocated for them during the housing process. VA case managers provided Veterans with addresses of prospective housing units and transportation for the housing search, assisted with paperwork, and mediated interactions between Veterans and the housing authority and prospective property owners.

[VA case managers] even took you around to certain spots so you can look at the places that you wanted to move into and then once you found the one you wanted to move into, then you went to—I did, I went down to the Veterans Multi-Service Center because I had no income and the first month’s deposit. And then you had to go through a little process with them and then you got your move-in day. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

As far as the housing search, that was beautiful that they set up and supplied a van and everything else and would take you out. All you had to do is say, “Hey, look, now I’m not from [City 1], I’m from [City 2]. I know all of [City 2], but I don’t know [City 1].” So, I did not know where to go or what to do. And, I told them. I said, “You know, this is where I’m going to have my problem.” I said, “I can sit up here and I got a GPS in my car. Still, I don’t know how to do all this.” And, they assisted us, and that was the best thing. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

[My VA case manager] connected me with [a property management company]. And they had so many apartments, and she went every step of the way with me to see the apartments, everything. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

Barriers

Conflict with property owners | Several respondents in each study group commented on conflicts with property owners during their housing search, noting that they were rude, sometimes deceitful, and unwilling to make repairs to apartments. Often struggles occurred in coordinating rent and using the HUD-VASH voucher. A few respondents discussed property owners being slow to process paperwork, and others referenced property owners not returning phone calls or inquiries about housing.

I had an issue, a situation, dealing with [the property owners], I guess. Like I said, I turned in the paperwork to him and her in a timely manner and they just sat on it. And I would call, checking on a weekly basis, had they done their part as far as filling out the paperwork that they needed to fill out. And the deed and everything that the program was requesting from them. All the paperwork that they needed. And it just seemed like they dragged their feet on it. And it did not help me. But I would call every week, saying, “Do you have those documents ready so I can turn the packet in?” And they just dragged their feet on it. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

The quality sucked, because it is a voucher. So, people feel that they do not give you what they don’t want to give you, and they do not want to deal with the rigmarole of the paperwork with the housing authority and receiving their check from whoever sends the

check and blah, blah, blah. So, some places, if it is really, really nice, they will tell you that they do not take the voucher, because they do not want your class of people in there. They stereotype you. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

Criminal Background

Veterans explained that some property owners would not rent to them because of their criminal histories.

It really is very hard. I mean, I can understand why they would not want to rent to a felon, but a lot of these people that have felonies—not to find an excuse for myself—it was from being in the wrong time and the wrong place. Totally my fault I guess. (Stayer—Houston)

[Housing] was fairly limited. I mean there are a large number of allowances, some that require a timeframe from your last felony conviction and some that just will not take felony convictions period. And the place where I am living at now, that I have been living at for the last few years, I mean they extorted me somewhat. They required a \$300 deposit, which is \$200 more than a normal deposit. And they did it, I am certain, because of my background. (Stayer—Houston)

Financial Issues

A number of respondents asserted that high rents, particularly in the neighborhoods where they desired to live, posed a challenge to their housing search. Other obstacles included having a poor credit history or access to limited funds for security deposits or application fees. Leased-up exiters, in particular, described financial issues.

My voucher was only so much. And mostly all the places that I had looked at, I still had to pay over what the voucher was. And a lot of the places, I was paying \$500–\$700 more. And they were just a small kind of room. And I am a little claustrophobic. It was just trying to find something big enough and close enough to HUD-VASH, to the VA center here. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

The biggest difficulty I had was coming up with the deposit. I asked, but they didn't have anything available. They told me about a program that was available in the county, but I didn't qualify for it. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

I do not have money to find a right place because all the places are so expensive. I cannot afford all of that. I cannot afford a single. I cannot afford the whole thing. Then you have utilities on top of it and you have a phone. It is kind of all of those things. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

And then the day before my voucher expired, they called and said I wasn't getting the apartment because of what was on my credit report. (Stayer—Houston)

Inspection Issues

Some respondents, most frequently exiters, commented on the inspection requirement and the challenge of completing it in a timely manner, as well as the possibility of the apartment failing the inspection.

Everything with my apartment was okay, but there were other things around the apartment complex itself that they didn't like so they flunked it. And I said, "Oh geez." They said, "Don't worry about it, because they will come out a second time and look at it again." So, they did that and this place flunked again. They had to have work done. Then I got a letter

that said we are not helping you with the rent at that place anymore. You need to come over here and get a new voucher from us and start looking for a new apartment. (Stayer—Houston)

Getting the apartment inspected was probably the longest part. It took about 2 weeks to get the apartment inspected to make sure everything was up to code, the heaters were working and there were no leaks. It took about 2 weeks to get that inspection done. I was kind of worried, because it was a good apartment. To me, it looked good. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

They wouldn't come down to inspect it, so they had to rent it to somebody else because they had 5 days. It wasn't the fifth day, it was the sixth day, the day after 5 days and housing didn't respond in time. I said you guys have already cost me one place to live. I said it took me about 28 days to find that place, but now I am not getting any responses. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

Limited Housing Options

Each study group, particularly nonleased exiters, reported difficulties in obtaining housing because of the limited options available, housing lists being out of date, and restrictions on localities where the voucher could be used. One Veteran reported difficulty finding an apartment that was wheelchair accessible.

The list that the housing authorities would supply, by the time—if there was anything good on that list—it was gone by the time you got the information. So, that is why it was good to get out—I had to get out—and do the leg work myself and try to find something that was available as it just became available. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

I continued to look. I tried to look for VA Section 8 after all the places were, “Oh no, we don't [take] Section 8. Oh no, we don't do city voucher.” And I was just okay because I'm staying in hotels, there's no big refrigerator, there's no microwave, there's no stove. So, I'm eating out. I'm gaining weight. All my saved-up funds, they're going elsewhere. So, by the time I chose to move on my apartment—even though I have like 2 weeks left on my voucher, I had enough money the day I chose to jump on that apartment—I had enough money to pay for the rest of December, which was 2 weeks plus 1 month security deposit. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

The difficulty is zip codes. You're limited to where you can go. You know sometimes a mere number on the zip code can shatter your plans, because I had a place, but the zip code—they told me I couldn't stay there. They said I could. Everything was a go, but the zip code said no. (Nonleased exiter—Houston)

I have a wheelchair. I was turned down from a lot of places, because they did not have access to get in with a wheelchair, or they did not want somebody that had a wheelchair, because they did not have access for it. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

Limited Time For Housing Search

Veterans in each study group discussed the time pressure associated with the housing search, explaining that they could lose their voucher if they could not identify an apartment within the allotted time.

I was in a little hurry, but it's time consuming when you want something particular going through VASH. You don't have too much time because your voucher has a time limit on it.

I was getting close to that time limit. I'm going, "Ahh!" Then, I knew that there was more paperwork that you had to do to get an extension. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

We are going to get it filled out—they would tell me that and tell me that. Until I ended up getting an extension because they used up so much of the time. And it did not leave me any other time or option to look for anything else. Because [of] the time constraint and time was running out. And I was like, "Wow. Now I got to take it because you got me behind the eight ball. I do not have time to be searching for anything else." (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

I mean, imagine it—you got this time limit. That's what drives you crazy every day. You're worrying about it, and it throws you off. It throws some people off. I think it makes people manic too much. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

Medical Conditions or Mental or Behavioral Health Conditions

Respondents, particularly nonleased exiters, discussed their health (for example, needing surgery) or history of mental health conditions or substance use as a challenge in their house-hunting experience.

Because I have PTSD and bipolar, and my therapist gave me a letter stating how important it was for me to keep my dog with me because my dog was a therapy dog. He was not certified yet. I had not had the opportunity to have him certified as a service dog. That right there was an issue. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

I mean, thank God the treatment is right here, but it's like very difficult going on a housing search when you have those issues going on and trying to focus and not deal with the triggers that's going on. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

Transportation

Veterans described transportation, or lack thereof, as a barrier to the housing search. It limited the areas in which they could look for housing and also prolonged the housing search because bus routes often did not offer direct routes between available units.

I had to get up funding for transportation and stuff like that. I was mostly interested in going over to the east side anyway. I had to think that if I wanted to maybe catch access to a bus going towards that way, that would eventually take me over towards [the shopping area] for the purpose of maybe going for groceries or something like that, and on the way stopping to investigate an apartment or something. It just never panned out. (Nonleased exiter—Houston)

It was hard to make a decision, because the housing that was available in the location was sort of far away from where I was working. Sad to say, that is a long commute. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

I would just say [the biggest challenge was an] inability to really get around like I needed to. Even though I do have a bus pass, it is time consuming. Public transportation is time consuming. So, having to get off this bus, that bus, this bus, it lessens the amount of places that you could get to in a day's time. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

Undesirable Neighborhoods

Respondents, especially exiters, described challenges related to avoiding high-crime and drug-infested neighborhoods. That issue was particularly important to Veterans who had a history of substance use and were trying to avoid relapse.

When I walked in the office, they did not seem very friendly about helping me from the beginning. They said they did not have anything available. I left the office and I walked to the end of the street of the apartment complex. I turned around and went back in there. I wanted to see what it was like. I started walking around the complex. I saw one guy in an alley smoking crack. I saw some man who came up to me and asked if I had a couple of dollars. There was no security in the place. All kinds of stuff was going on. People had some kind of makeshift clothesline from one end of a door to another building, stretching their clothes, three or four lines, stretching their clothes across the lines. There was loud music. You could smell the stench of urine around the buildings and all that kind of stuff. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

I'm an ex-drug addict. I'd like to stay away from drugs, and everything that they were accepting were right there in the drug area. So, it was hard to find a place that wasn't in those areas. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

I tried to get myself on track and then I explained to them where I wanted to live at in a nice, comfortable area. No drugs or alcohol. No loudness. Comfortable, peace, quiet, and something that I can appreciate. Being on drugs and alcohol and then moving into a neighborhood or vicinity or environment that has that around, it only increases the nature of you running back to your old, familiar behaviors. I wanted to get away from all of that. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

Unsuitable Housing

Several respondents described the units they visited as unsuitable for habitation, reporting problems with plumbing, electrical outlets, broken appliances, and bug infestation. Although Veterans were less likely to speak about undesirable neighborhoods during interviews, stayers were more apt to describe unsuitable housing than were both exiter groups.

When I first used the HUD-VASH, the list that HUD-VASH gave me for housing, the majority of the houses that I went to on the HUD-VASH were like holes in the wall, dumps. Then I called my friend, who is a realtor, and she went on a database and we found a place that was suitable. (Stayer—Houston)

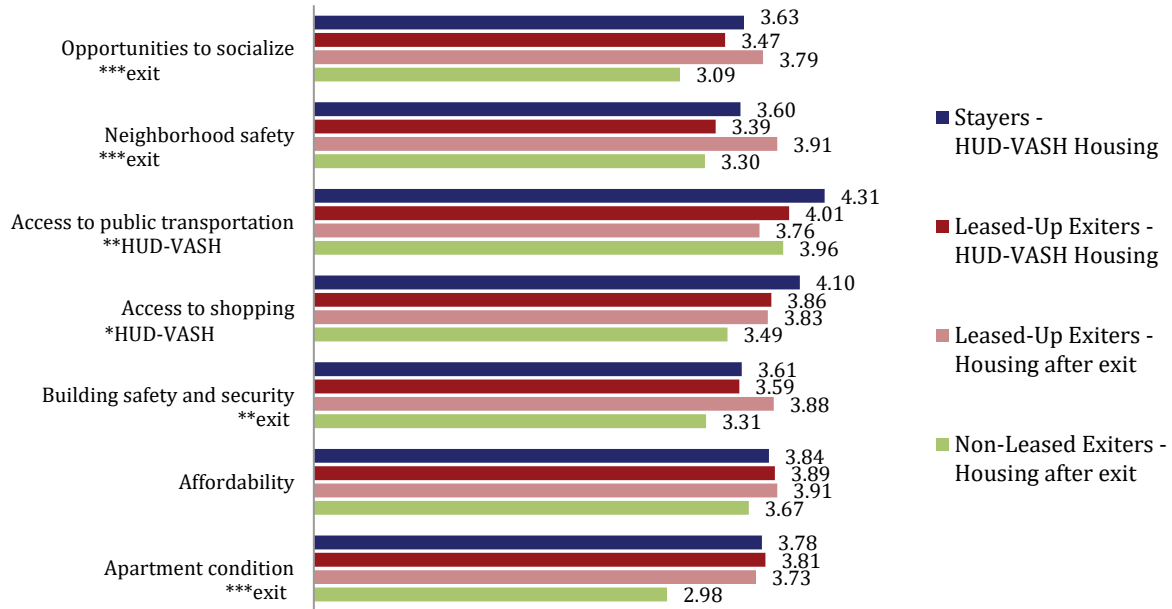
I found them unacceptable. Water issues, I mean, plumbing issues, paint chipping, and even the area had a lot to do with it. But, mainly, it was the physical structure of the apartment that, to me, it was not acceptable. I did not need an inspector to come out and see that this was unacceptable, because I have been a home and office remodeler for 17 years. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

HOUSING SATISFACTION

Both stayers and leased-up exiters described general satisfaction with the housing they leased while in HUD-VASH, using a five-point scale ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to completely satisfied (5). Veterans had some concerns, however, including neighborhood and building safety

and security. Leased-up exiters reported less satisfaction overall with HUD-VASH housing compared with stayers (see exhibit 5.16).

Exhibit 5.16 Housing Satisfaction While in HUD-VASH and After Exit, Study Respondents (N=508) | mean



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Notes: Response values ranged from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied). Statistical significance is indicated by *p ≤ 0.10, **p ≤ 0.05 and ***p ≤ 0.01.

Source: Veteran Survey

Interviewers also asked leased-up exiters to rate their satisfaction with their current housing. In contrast to low levels of satisfaction with safety while in HUD-VASH, satisfaction with neighborhood safety increased more than 10 percent and satisfaction with building safety and security increased more than 5 percent following their exit from the program. Veterans’ satisfaction with opportunities to socialize also rose by more than 6 percent for leased-up exiters. Satisfaction with apartment condition and access to shopping and public transportation decreased following their exit from HUD-VASH, however. Compared with the other study groups, nonleased exiters had lower levels of satisfaction in every area except access to public transportation, and they reported the least satisfaction with the apartment condition.

Respondents spoke in detail about the quality of their housing. Although some respondents reported positive experiences with moving in, living independently, accessing new amenities, and having responsive property owners, others reported unresponsive property owners or poorly maintained housing units. The main themes related to housing satisfaction are listed in exhibit 5.17.

Exhibit 5.17 HUD-VASH Housing Satisfaction Experiences, Qualitative Respondents

Amenities

Location

General satisfaction

Problem with housing, property owner or neighborhood

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: Veteran Interview

Amenities

Respondents commented on the amenities (for example, weight room, community center, computer room, elevators, security cameras) available with units and how they played a role in their housing decision and satisfaction. Several respondents placed a greater value on the availability of those amenities than on other factors, such as price.

When I first drove out there, it looked like it was brand new. Every other place had been there for like 8 years. And, one of the attractions there—they have a weight room, and they have got a computer room, with free access to the Internet, and they got a community center where they throw little parties and stuff like that. Of course, it was like \$100–\$150 cheaper at the other places, but I would rather pay that for the amenities. (Stayer—Houston)

It's a very secure building with cameras. It's reasonably secure. Nothing is foolproof, but it's relatively quiet. The tenants are decent people for the most part. To that end, it has a washer, dryer, whatever you need to survive in this situation, so that's good. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

General Satisfaction

Some respondents were content with living independently and having their own housing, which they often described as “acceptable” and “nice.” Stayers were slightly more likely to discuss general housing satisfaction than were leased-up exiters.

That was the best feeling in the world, when I first got my place. It was my bed, my food. That was good. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

I think that my best experience was having my own place with privacy, you know, gaining a certain dignity and self-respect to maintain. You know, I actually enjoy keeping my apartment clean. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

I walked in and I fell in love with it. I just liked everything about the apartment. I did not even really need to do a tour. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

My main concern was my safety, being a female and being alone, and you know [my VA case manager] suggested this place. I went out there, and I knew the area, because I used to work in that area, so I was kind of familiar with the area, but I was just like—I liked it from day one. I'm like, I think this is really good. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

Location

Respondents discussed being pleased with the location of their unit. Some Veterans mentioned looking for housing close to their current place of employment or family, and a significant number discussed proximity to public transportation and business centers as a key factor in choosing their housing location. Several respondents commented on the importance of neighborhood

characteristics. Stayers were much more likely than leased-up exiters to express satisfaction with their housing location.

It's all good. It's all family-orientated so it's not really like a—you don't have people moving in and out monthly; it's like people actually live there and they kind of keep that place like a home. Like the whole building—everybody knows everybody. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

I was pretty much set on that one because it was very convenient. You know, I could take the bus in or I could take the train in town. I am going to AA and I made most of the meetings downtown so that was what I was interested in. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

I also chose that location because of my background and it is in a place where nobody knows me. I know nobody except for the one person that's from the recovery house that I am. And that is how it has been over the last 3 years. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

Problem With Housing, Property Owner, Or Neighborhood

Some Veterans reported problems with substandard housing or neighborhoods in which they felt unsafe or had security concerns. A few respondents noted that some property owners did not maintain the buildings or charged them extra rent, although they were not permitted by the housing authority to do so. Leased-up exiters discussed those problems slightly more frequently than did stayers.

You go onto the website on apartments and you rate them. Oh, yeah, I went on there and told them, "Do not move over there. He is an asshole. It is a waste of time." Once you get there, they going to talk to you real nice to get you in, and once you in, they do not care. All they want is they money, they do not, I mean, they do not keep the property up. The city had to come out and make them do landscaping. They had to make them fix the pools, because one of the pools was condemned. They do not care. They just want money. (Stayer—Houston)

I just felt that my privacy a lot of times was violated because the guys they kind of lobbied around the pool, and I lived by the pool. I felt uncomfortable with my blinds open because they were always in a position that they could look straight through. One time, I went to walk toward the window and close it, and they waved at me. I thought, "I will just close the blinds," you know. I could not keep my bedroom—I caught them looking through the bedroom. It was just an uncomfortable feeling. I was alone with a son—one child—I just did not, I never felt comfortable there. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

A guy got killed about 50 feet from where I was staying. I was on the corner; I lived in the alley. [He was] killed across the street. That was just one. There were several—young gang bangers, kids—doing that gangster stuff. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

We do not have secure doors and you have hoochies crawling up and down the hallways at night, and drug dealers, and guys that had been to prison. It was not cool. And meanwhile, the landlord is oblivious to all that. He is just busy collecting his rent. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

PROGRAM SATISFACTION

The overwhelming majority of study respondents felt that HUD-VASH was a good fit for their needs (95.9 percent of stayers, 90.0 percent of leased-up exiters, and 87.9 percent of nonleased exiters). Those Veterans who did not believe it was a good fit either felt that they did not need as

much support as the program offered and that it had too many rules or they needed more support than the program offered.

SUMMARY

Accessing the voucher took approximately 3 months and was slightly faster for nonleased exiters than for Veterans in the other study groups. Along each stage of the housing process—from assessment to moving into permanent housing—stayers required more time than did leased-up exiters. That may be because the vast majority of stayers entered the program before its shift in FFY 2013 to a Housing First approach, which emphasizes rapid placement in permanent housing. Further exploration indicated that both admission to the program after HUD-VASH's transition to Housing First and the frequency of VA case management contacts significantly decreased the number of days required for a Veteran to receive a voucher and access permanent housing.

Stayers and leased-up exiters most frequently reported receiving their HUD-VASH vouchers while living in a location that provided supportive services, such as transitional housing or substance abuse treatment facilities, followed by living with friends and family. By contrast, nonleased exiters more frequently reported being literally homeless (that is, in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation), followed by living with friends or family. Stayers' and leased-up exiters' living arrangements seem to have remained stable during the period between voucher receipt and apartment selection.

Compared with stayers and leased-up exiters, nonleased exiters generally found the HUD-VASH housing process to be more difficult. A substantial portion of nonleased exiters, however, completed two of the processes described as most difficult by stayers and leased-up exiters: finding an acceptable apartment option and obtaining money for move-in costs, although they never accessed housing. Nonleased exiters were less likely than the other groups to report receiving assistance in submitting the HUD-VASH application or finding apartment options.

Additionally, although at least 40 percent of all study respondents visited four or more apartments during their housing search—indicating a high degree of choice in housing—more than one-half reported not receiving assistance with that process.

A minority of Veterans who leased housing reported receiving move-in assistance. Veterans were only moderately satisfied with the level of safety at their units; after leaving the program, leased-up exiters reported higher levels of satisfaction regarding safety issues. On the other hand, nonleased exiters, who never entered HUD-VASH housing, were less satisfied with their housing than were Veterans who leased housing with HUD-VASH vouchers. Some Veterans expressed concerns regarding program requirements, such as meeting with their VA case manager, attending a group, or maintaining sobriety. Although Veterans reported a variety of facilitators and barriers to the housing process, a significant majority of Veterans in all study groups reported that HUD-VASH was a good fit for their needs.

CHAPTER 6: VA CASE MANAGEMENT

This chapter presents information about VA case management. VA case management is intended to support participants’ access to housing and housing stability; VA case managers may assist Veterans with the housing search and move-in processes and connect Veterans with supportive services such as health care, mental health treatment, and substance use counseling. This chapter includes details from administrative records entered by VA case managers that indicate when Veterans received VA case management throughout their participation in HUD-VASH, as well as descriptive findings related to facilitators and barriers to VA case management described by Veterans during qualitative interviews. Supporting data tables are included in appendix I.

FREQUENCY OF VA CASE MANAGEMENT CONTACTS

VA Case Management Requirements

During site visits, VA case management teams described current VA case management requirements for HUD-VASH participants; those requirements differed across programs, but each site required at least monthly contact with Veterans (see exhibit 6.1).

Exhibit 6.1 VA Case Management Requirements

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
During housing process	Monthly face-to-face meeting, monthly contact with VA housing specialist	Weekly phone call and monthly face-to-face meeting	Weekly face-to-face meeting	Weekly orientation meeting, weekly phone call, and monthly face-to-face meeting
Year 1	Monthly home visit	Monthly face-to-face meeting	Monthly home visit	Monthly home visit
Year 2	Monthly home visit	Quarterly face-to-face meeting	Monthly home visit	Monthly phone call
Year 3	Monthly home visit	Two annual face-to-face meetings	Monthly home visit	Monthly phone call
Notes		Once a Veteran is accepted into HUD-VASH, the VA case manager becomes the first point of contact at the VA for all case management services.		In lieu of monthly VA case manager contact, Veterans may attend a group meeting.

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing.

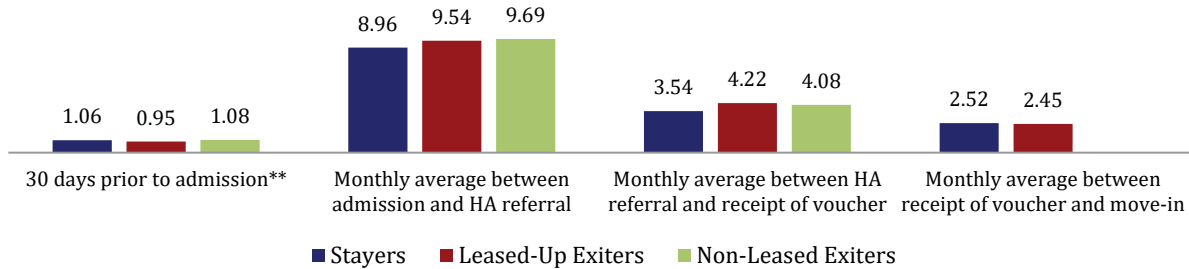
Source: Staff Interview

Administrative Records

VA case managers enter information about HUD-VASH contacts in Veterans’ VA medical records. Exhibit 6.2 depicts the average number of contacts per month that HUD-VASH participants received throughout different stages of the housing process.¹¹ At most stages of the housing process, the frequency of contact with VA case managers was similar for the three study groups.

Following move-in, both stayers and leased-up exiters saw a decline in contact with VA case managers; however, 1 year following move-in, leased-up exiters’ frequency of contact with their VA case managers was 1.5 times that of stayers (see exhibit 6.3).

Exhibit 6.2 Frequency of VA Case Management During Housing Process, HUD-VASH Participants (N=7,383) | mean

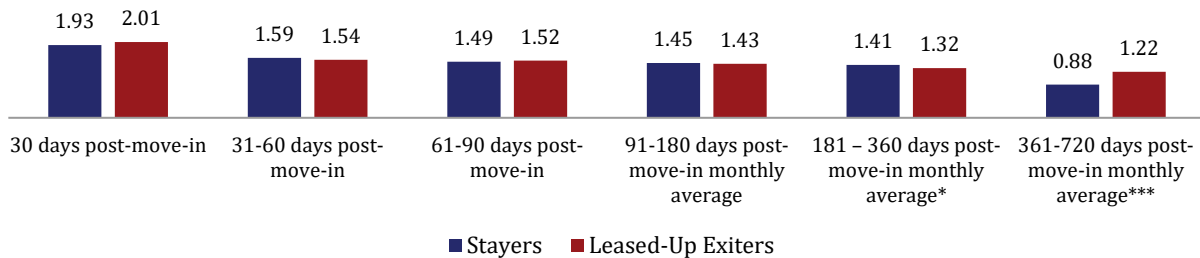


HA = housing authority. HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing.

Note: Statistical significance is indicated by **p ≤ 0.05.

Source: VA Medical Record

Exhibit 6.3 Frequency of VA Case Management Following Move-in, HUD-VASH Participants (N=7,383) | mean



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing.

Note: Statistical significance is indicated by *p ≤ 0.10 and ***p ≤ 0.01.

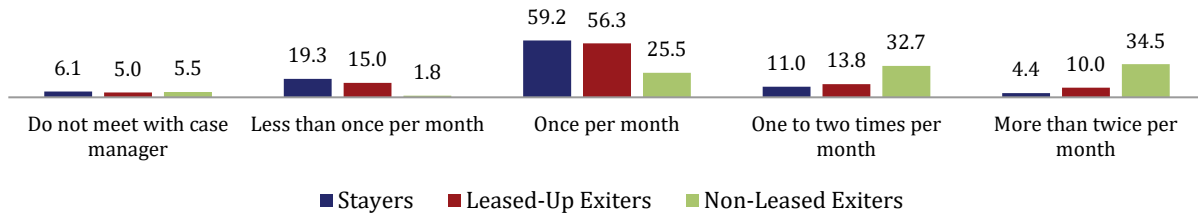
Source: VA Medical Record

¹¹ Veterans were excluded if no time elapsed between two sequential points in the housing process (for example, if program admission and housing authority referral occurred on the same date). Note that contacts are measured by the number of notations made in the Veteran’s medical record and can range from a message left on a Veteran’s voicemail to a home visit.

Veterans' Perspectives

The majority of stayers and leased-up exiters indicated during interviews that they met with their VA case managers monthly. Nonleased exiters were more likely to report that they met with their VA case managers more often: one-third met with their VA case manager one to two times per month or more than twice per month (see exhibit 6.4). The more frequent visits reported by nonleased exiters likely reflects the higher level of VA case management that occurs when Veterans first enter the HUD-VASH program; however, it also demonstrates that nonleased exiters recall meeting with VA case managers quite often—more than one-third reported meeting more than twice per month—yet those Veterans still did not access housing.

Exhibit 6.4 Self-Reported Number of Monthly Meetings With VA Case Manager, Study Respondents (N=498) | percent



VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

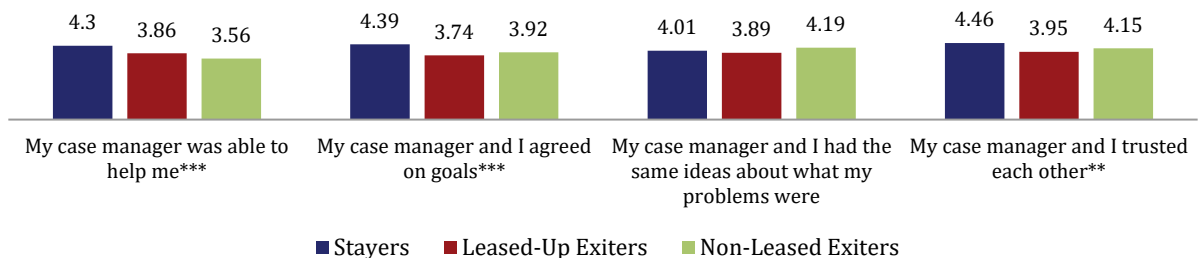
Note: N includes 363 stayers, 80 leased-up exiters, and 55 nonleased exiters.

Source: Veteran Survey

VA CASE MANAGEMENT SATISFACTION

Among study respondents, stayers reported overall higher levels of satisfaction with their relationships with their VA case managers compared with both exiter groups. Nonleased exiters indicated higher levels of satisfaction than did leased-up exiters, with the exception of their VA case managers' ability to help them. Leased-up exiters seemed less satisfied with VA case management overall (see figure 6.5).

Exhibit 6.5 VA Case Management Satisfaction, Study Respondents (N=508) | mean



VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Note: Response values ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Statistical significance is indicated by ***p ≤ 0.05 and **p ≤ 0.01.

Source: Veteran Survey

FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

During qualitative interviews, many Veterans described positive and supportive relationships with their VA case managers, highlighting the importance of continuity and access. They explained that their VA case managers were able to keep them on task and inspire them to move forward. Veterans also spoke about the support provided by VA peer support specialists, underscoring the value of connecting with someone with shared experience. Other Veterans, however, described poor experiences with their VA case managers, explaining that they were often overworked, slow to respond to issues, and unsupportive. Some Veterans explained that personal issues, such as substance abuse, were barriers to effective use of both VA case managers and peer support specialists. The most common facilitators and barriers to VA case management described by Veterans are listed in exhibit 6.6.

Exhibit 6.6 VA Case Management Facilitators and Barriers, Qualitative Respondents

Facilitators	Barriers
Accessibility Access to resources Advocacy Highly supportive and helpful Individualized service Peer support specialists Veteran accountability	High turnover Impersonal or nonempathetic interactions Irregular meetings Nonresponsiveness Unmet expectations Veteran readiness

VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
 Source: Veteran Interview

Facilitators

Accessibility

Respondents described VA case managers’ accessibility (for example, returning phone calls) leading to a positive relationship; stayers and leased-up exiters described VA case managers as accessible more frequently than did nonleased exiters.

What I really like about them is they don’t waste any time getting things done. If I call them today, they will call me back no later than tomorrow, and I’ve never gotten an “I don’t know,” or “I can’t answer.” It’s like every problem that I’ve had, they’ve been on it. They don’t mess around, in other words. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

I think it worked out pretty fine being that way that you would not have to wait around when you need to see a case manager. Or if you had any problems and the case manager that you wanted to see was not in, well, you was able to see others who could help you take care of your business. (Stayer—Houston)

Open door. I can call and say, “Hey, I got some issues. I would like to come back and be case managed” and be okay. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

Access to Resources

Access to resources was the most referenced facilitator of VA case management. Respondents explained that VA case managers provided a variety of resources, including referrals to programs that assist with or provide housing, security deposits, moving costs, clothing, food, and furniture,

as well as information about educational programs, job search support, and therapeutic group meetings.

My caseworker would help me with it, even financially sometimes. Not right from that person, but information on where to get help. If I need food, there is a list you dig up. Clothing is another thing. She gave me a list of different churches and stuff. At first, I did not utilize anything like that. Like I said, my whole mindset was different. And they started to come in handy. I had to change. So the relationship with her was basically she was trying to domesticate me. And that helped domesticate me, information-wise. (Stayer—Houston)

They are very good at finding other resources like food banks, energy assistance programs, even employment if that is what one is looking for. They are also very assisting in helping one to get information, say, from the military, medical records. Right now I am trying to get my discharge upgraded and my case manager sent the paperwork to my apartment and I got to get it filled out and returned. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

They help and assist if you call them and let them know you are looking for a job and what type of job you looking for. They will refer you to some people to help you find jobs. They go out in the community to find people that will help Veterans into getting jobs. They will hire Veterans, like basically they are going to help; they find people that will help hire Veterans with disabilities or whatever. (Stayer—Houston)

Advocacy

Respondents described situations in which VA case managers helped them deal with the HUD-VASH enrollment process or rent payments, spoke on their behalf, or expedited processes. VA case managers also helped Veterans mediate conflicts with property owners, apartment management, and the housing authority. Stayers and leased-up exiters discussed advocacy more frequently than did nonleased exiters.

If I need anything or if I run into a problem—like I had a problem at my apartment complex where I was coming off of my deck and I fell and my ankle was like this, and they were giving me flack about fixing it. I was like, “Are you kidding me? I can sue you!” With [my VA case manager] backing me up, calling [the housing authority], making sure the inspector came down and everything—my deck is beautiful. I had no problem with them, they were very respectful. The building is fantastic. So they are good backup. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

I actually got interviewed by [my VA case manager] over the phone and it was very—she was very informative. I told her that I had applied for the HUD-VASH a year prior to my conversation with her and she did some research and along with one of the fellows that works at the HUD-VASH program, they were able to recover my paperwork and basically get me back into the same slot that I should have been all along. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

Highly Supportive And Helpful

Veterans described their VA case managers as genuinely caring about their well-being. A few respondents talked about establishing a level of trust, respect, and even friendship with their VA case managers. Some described VA case managers as going beyond what was necessary to help

them, including visiting Veterans during hospital stays. Stayers most frequently described VA case managers as highly supportive and helpful, followed by leased-up exiters and nonleased exiters.

Just their willingness to help me take care of any problems I may have. They always seem like they are concerned and ready to care about me helping myself, helping me help myself. They always are willing to listen to anything I have to say, or any problems I am having, or even the good things that are happening to me, and they have always got a good ear for listening. I do not know. I have enjoyed them, you know? What can I say? I mean, I am, like I said, I am so enamored with this program, I just cannot stand it. (Stayer—Houston)

She was my guidance, I guess. They genuinely cared to see that you make it through the issues that you are going through. I think they do more than their job in a way. (Nonleased exiter—Philadelphia)

Individualized Service

Respondents from each study group commented that their VA case managers oriented them to the HUD-VASH program, which they found very helpful.

It was an experience. It was almost like buying a new house, so to speak. [My VA case manager] was very helpful. She walked me through everything, explained everything to me. And it was—I could not believe how easy it was and why I could not have learned this a long time ago. I could have been off the street a long time ago. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

I kind of got along with her right away. She understood everything. She dealt mostly with people with schizophrenia. She knew the process—to not throw too much at you and go slow, not pushing you. Right away, she knew that my situation was not as bad as others. She knew she could be more lenient. As far as her being more understanding, I think she was well on—she knew her stuff. She knew how to make a Veteran feel at ease. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

The day I was getting ready to commit suicide, [the VA case manager and another VA staff member] were on their way to my house. We was, my daughter and I had just walked into the hospital. We were standing at the new emergency room window when I saw [my VA case manager] pass. She said, “You called me.” I did not even remember calling her. She said, “You called me and left me a strange message and we were on our way to your house right now.” And me and my daughter was standing at the emergency room. She convinced me to sign myself in. I was losing it and I did not even know. She saved my life. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

Peer Support Specialists

Several stayers described the VA peer support specialists as a beneficial aspect of the program, helping with appointments and securing resources.

She sent me another person to help—a peer counselor. That person was perfect, because I hated her guts. She was so rough on me. Yeah, boy she was rough. And she was always telling me—what is that phrase? “Pick up your books and...” She was all up in a tizzy. And I did not like her. And I was going to tell her not to come back. And I realized boy, if it

was not for her—stop feeling sorry for myself. I changed 180 degrees. I feel a lot better. (Stayer—Houston)

She really connected with all of us. Like she would sit us in a room. And she also lives in [City], so I think that really helped a lot, because if we would start a conversation that she would follow-up, and she would say, “Oh, yeah, I know because X, Y, and Z. Oh, I know about that. Trust me, trust me. I have been there.” So the fact that we were able to connect with her, and she was able to relate to—I mean, she might not have been homeless, but at one point in her life she was faced with some of these challenges that we were facing. And because she was able to connect with us, she really put 100 percent effort into helping us and finding different stuff to help us. (Nonleased exiter—Philadelphia)

Veteran Accountability

Veterans appreciated that their VA case managers regularly discussed goal setting, identification of Veterans’ needs, and overall well-being. Most respondents—particularly stayers—found the accountability provided by VA case managers to be very helpful.

She was very compassionate, very concerned as to my whereabouts and what I was doing every step of the way. And even after all that fell apart, she still was checking. She still was checking on me as far as my well-being. She really was. From beginning to end. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

She is always checking up on me. She is asking me how I am doing. She texts me all the time. She asks me what I need. I ask her and she gives me results. I ask a question and she looks into it. She does. She does not wait 2 weeks to give me an answer. She will call me that day or the next day. She is very helpful. Whatever I need, she is there for me. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

Just trying to keep me focused on how I need to do things so that we can maintain stability for the family. Sometimes you know when you are going through a crisis, especially, and like with me because I was really on a downward spin after my son was killed. It was really hard for me to try to just figure how to go on even putting one foot in front of another. So, just to have that support. (Stayer—Houston)

Barriers

High Turnover

Respondents identified the high turnover rates of VA case managers as a barrier to developing good relationships, establishing trust, and encouraging one-on-one attention. Veterans commented that changes could be abrupt, with little or no warning and insufficient time to facilitate a smooth transition. Stayers were most likely to take issue with VA staff turnover, followed by leased-up exiters.

They were so short. Most of them stayed like a month and you didn’t get a chance to know them that well. We changed case managers, and the others, they didn’t stay that long. I don’t know if they’re in transition or they’re in training a day, a week, a month. Before you get to know them, well, they’re gone, someone else comes in. And it’s been like that because we were trying to build a relationship with one person at a time. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

I think it was an abrupt change without knowledge, first of all. I think a shift in case management needs to be addressed, even if they don't tell you one-on-one—just prepare you for that to get help elsewhere and shift like that. Like shifting for a person with PTSD is very difficult and so when I got with the new case manager, she was not as available as my first case manager. And, again, not to say that she didn't do a good job for me—it was just an abrupt shift and also the caseload was much higher than when I first came into the program. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

Impersonal or Nonempathetic Interactions

Some respondents described their VA case managers as nonempathetic or impersonal. Several Veterans indicated that their negative relationships with their VA case managers made them feel that they wanted to leave the program. Others noted that their VA case managers were not sensitive to their concerns. Respondents with those experiences generally described the relationship as being a “bad” one. Leased-up exiters described those types of interactions most often.

My experience with my second case manager, I really felt like a number. I knew at that point there was an overload in case management and that my position was, “Just get you a house and we'll deal with this later.” But that wasn't true for me. Again, being a female with PTSD, some of the issues that came up for me were more frightening for me to look for housing at that point. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

She never called me. She never even knew when [my voucher] expired. I figured if she did even know about that, she didn't care. So, I moved into the apartment and after I moved into the apartment, she called me about 3 weeks to a month later and she's like, “Oh, your voucher is about to expire, I think, or is it not, or is it already expired?” Like she didn't know. I'm like, “I'm already in my own apartment.” She's like, “Oh really?” I was like, “Yeah.” She's like, “Through VASH?” I said, “No, I wouldn't have the money.” She didn't seem to care. She's like, “Okay. Well, call me if you need anything. ‘Bye.’” Click. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

Irregular Meetings

Respondents discussed irregular meetings with their VA case managers as a barrier to maintaining a good relationship. A similar proportion of respondents in each study group cited irregular meetings as a barrier to VA case management.

I am sure I had somebody because everybody, according to what I understand, has a case manager, but I did not see a case manager for over a year. (Stayer—Houston)

You know, actually, I think I did meet him for a minute at that enrollment. Yeah, he was about to leave, they handed him my file, he shook hands with me and he went on his way. I was able to meet him later on when I went to his office. I did meet him one time—I mean it was just for a minute. He was already leaving. (Nonleased exiter—Houston)

I met the other guy twice. Once, a surprise visit at my house when you call him up and he just knocks on the door, which I did not like. He did not call me or anything, he just knocked. Matter of fact he knocked on the wrong door. He came to ours in the back. We were number five. I guess he could not tell which was which, but that is how I met him, come knock on my door. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

Nonresponsiveness

Some respondents described their VA case managers as nonresponsive (for example, not returning phone calls, slow to act). A few Veterans mentioned the importance of communication and having a clear understanding of expectations at the beginning of the relationship, whereas others noted that their VA case managers were never available and they did not feel well served while in the program. Nonleased exiters described nonresponsiveness most frequently.

I called them. You get the reception lady. She will say that she will tell Such-and-Such that you called. They will take your name and phone number. It may not be in the morning when they call you back. It may be a day or so later. Sometimes I waited 3 days for them to call me back. I understand that case managers have a certain caseload. They may have 50 people. You do not want to hear 50 people calling your line. I understand that. If she has somebody that is taking messages for her in-office, or she can contact them directly, that is fine. It is hard to get in touch with the HUD-VASH or the VA counselors for the HUD-VASH. Some of these people gave me their direct numbers, and they still do not answer the phone. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

I'm not pleased with the response of the case manager. I know everyone is busy, but I've been trying to call because I'm seeking to transfer my voucher now and move to a different neighborhood. And unless you go to the meeting, that's the only way you're sure to see or speak with your case manager. Lots of times you call and you leave a message on the phone, they don't return your calls. There's no time you can pick up the phone and call them directly or pick up and answer. I left three messages so far this week. And I'll have to go in probably to see her in person. I called her on her cell phone. She gave me her card—I have it in my wallet right now. And I called her cell phone and I still—I even left a message. She still hasn't returned my call because they get that busy, or what have you, or they said their priorities are different but that's one thing that I don't—you cannot speak to them directly in case of an emergency. I guarantee you cannot pick up the phone and get your case manager and talk to them directly. So access to your case managers, you know, we'd much more appreciate. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

I just started to sink more into depression. I thought, "This is what you come home to." You know, you say, well, you go to Iraq, you come back. They say, now that you have been at war, Veteran—they are going to look after you. They are going to take care of you. [My VA case manager] was a no show several times. She just plainly came out and said she forgot. And I thought, "Well what is it you think they are paying you for if you forgot me?" (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

Unmet Expectations

Respondents described disappointment with their VA case managers' inability to guide them through the program, provide them with information or resources, and act as advocates on their behalf. Some Veterans noted that their VA case managers did not understand the process themselves and were unable to help them, and other Veterans thought their VA case managers were simply doing the bare minimum of their duties. Exiters—especially nonleased—mentioned this more frequently than stayers.

For example, he asked if I had enough food or anything. He asked if I needed help. One day I called him because I did not have any food. He could not help me. Why would he

even tell me that if he was not able to help me with certain questions I had? I had questions about transportation programs and maybe about schooling. He had no answers for me. He was surprised that I asked a question. He was the one who asked me if I needed help with food and I asked. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

He did not support me one bit, told me what I had to do and that was it. He did not support me one bit. He told me, “You know, I cannot help you with this, you are on your own.” If I had been told at the beginning that you have to do all this stuff by yourself instead of, “We will support you,” but they do not. That is why I asked the one to be removed from my case. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

My case manager didn’t help me at all when I needed the help. Basically, I was on my own. She was just a sounding board. She didn’t do much to help the progress of me securing the voucher. And my case manager only spoke to the real estate agent one time also. And she was just incompetent. I thought she was incompetent because it seemed like a lot of times she just didn’t know what to do. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

I guess it’s that he doesn’t agree with my lifestyle choices as far as career-wise. So we’re kind of stand offish with each other because of it. I mean, he was because when I told him that I was in school, he was like, “What school are you in?” I was like, “The Art Institute.” He was like, “The Art Institute?” He’s like, “You got time for that?” You know, just the little comments that he was making. I was like, “I know that you don’t agree with what I do, but this is what I do.” It seems like if this is what I’m going to do or if this is my career choice, I’m not going to get the type of help that I need. (Stayer—Houston)

Veteran Readiness

A few respondents explained that their own lack of readiness to transition into the program—often related to addiction, procrastination, or limited independence—affected their relationships with their VA case managers. Although this reason was mentioned infrequently, leased-up exiters cited this barrier more often than stayers or nonleased exiters.

I had a couple of peer support people that reached out to me that were going to help me try and find a place right after I got the voucher, but I didn’t call them back, because I was going through some other things right then. (Stayer—Houston)

As far as peer support, they would offer groups that I could come in at 10, but because of my addiction, I procrastinated on that. My case manager would come out and talk to me. I would be, honestly would with agreeing, but not fully honest. And as a result of me not taking advantage of the support that was offered, I wound up losing it. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

SUMMARY

VA case management requirements varied across the study sites but typically required at least one monthly contact, consistent with the requirements of the HUD-VASH program. Administrative data related to contact between Veterans and VA case managers indicated that the most intense period of case management was between admission to the program and referral to the housing authority, followed by the period between referral to the housing authority and receipt of the voucher. Nonleased exiters generally had less frequent VA case management

contacts during those periods, compared with Veterans in the other study groups, even after taking into account the length of time between program admission and receipt of voucher. The frequency of VA case management contact with Veterans who moved into a housing unit gradually decreased.

Data collected during interviews with Veterans indicated that the majority of study respondents reported that they had contact with their VA case managers at least monthly. Veterans in the three study groups generally were satisfied with VA case management, with slightly higher levels of satisfaction among stayers. Nonleased exiters generally agreed on goals and problem areas with their VA case managers and felt that they had a trusting relationship, but VA case managers were not able to assist them, at least in comparison with stayers and leased-up exiters. Study respondents described a number of facilitators of the VA case management relationship, including having a VA case manager who was accessible, supportive, resourceful, and able to keep Veterans accountable. Barriers to that relationship were the high rate of turnover among VA case management staff, as well as irregular interaction between Veterans and VA case managers and Veterans' level of readiness to actively participate in case management.

CHAPTER 7: VA HEALTH SERVICES USE

In addition to receiving VA case management, Veterans participating in HUD-VASH may receive care provided by other clinicians at their local VA medical centers, including outpatient and inpatient healthcare for medical, mental or behavioral health, and substance use issues. Assessing HUD-VASH participants’ use of those health-related services provides some insight into their engagement with primary care and the extent to which they may avoid more acute services, such as inpatient admissions for mental or behavioral health and substance use issues. A detailed description of the categories of health services is included in appendix C.

This chapter describes Veterans’ use of VA healthcare services immediately before their enrollment in HUD-VASH, as well as at different stages of the housing process and after move-in and exit from the program, if applicable. In addition, this chapter presents study respondents’ self-reported health status during their time in the program, as described during interviews. Supporting data tables are included in appendix I.

VA HEALTH SERVICES USE DURING HOUSING PROCESS

Exhibit 7.1 displays the average monthly number of outpatient medical, mental or behavioral health, and substance use visits, by study group, for HUD-VASH participants 90 days before their admission to HUD-VASH, 90 days after admission, and 90 days after move-in, if applicable. Data indicate that all study groups decreased the frequency of medical, mental or behavioral health, and substance use visits after their admission to HUD-VASH; that decline continued for stayers and leased-up exiters following move-in. Nonleased exiters had the fewest number of outpatient visits and decreased their service use after program admission, which may indicate a weaker connection with services among this group.

Exhibit 7.1 Monthly Outpatient Visits During Housing Process, HUD-VASH Participants (N=7,383) | mean



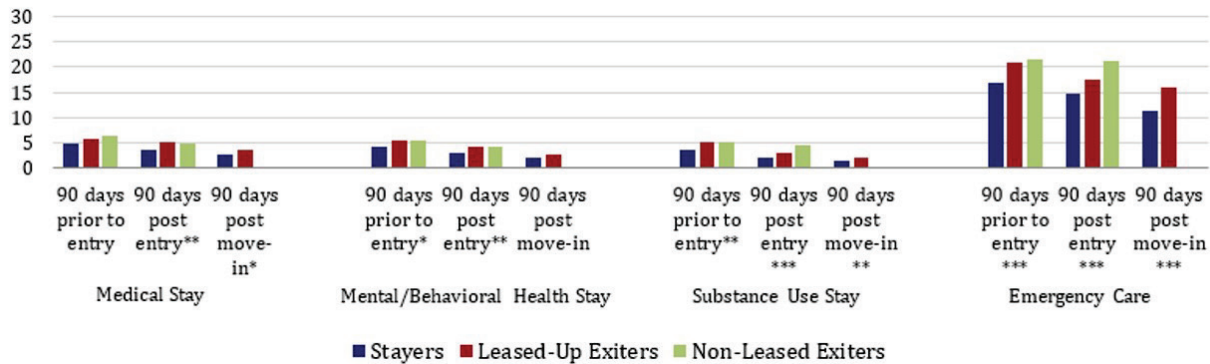
HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Note: Statistical significance is indicated by **p ≤ 0.05 and ***p ≤ 0.01.

Source: VA Medical Record

Exhibit 7.2 displays the proportion of HUD-VASH participants who had a medical, mental or behavioral health, or substance use inpatient stay or an emergency care contact during the same time periods. The proportion of HUD-VASH participants with inpatient stays declined over time for all study groups. Both leased-up and nonleased exiters, however, were more likely than stayers to use inpatient and emergency care during each period. Although leased-up and nonleased exiters had similar levels of inpatient care, a higher proportion of nonleased exiters had a substance use inpatient stay or received emergency care 90 days after admission to HUD-VASH.

Exhibit 7.2 Inpatient Stays and Emergency Care During Housing Process, HUD-VASH Participants (N=7,294) | percent



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Notes: N includes 2,775 stayers, 3,068 leased-up exiters, and 1,451 nonleased exiters. Statistical significance is indicated by *p ≤ 0.10, **p ≤ 0.05 and ***p ≤ 0.01.

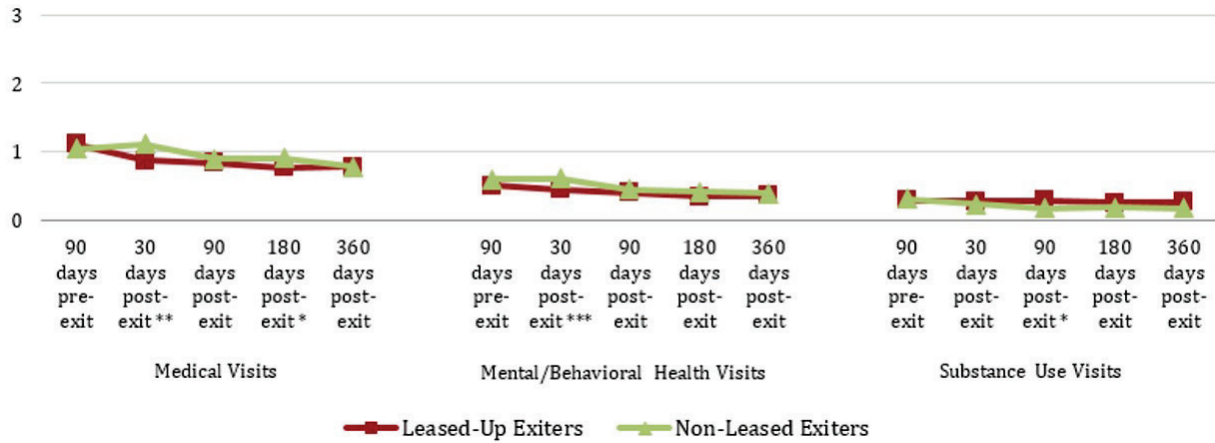
Source: VA Medical Record

VA HEALTH SERVICES USE BEFORE AND AFTER EXIT

Exhibit 7.3 illustrates the frequency of outpatient services use for leased-up and nonleased exiters before and following their exit from HUD-VASH. The average monthly number of medical visits increased slightly immediately after exit from the program for nonleased exiters and then decreased over time. Among leased-up exiters, the number of visits decreased or remained constant across all intervals. The frequency of mental or behavioral health visits remained fairly constant for both groups. Substance use visits declined slightly for nonleased exiters.

Exhibit 7.4 illustrates HUD-VASH participants’ use of inpatient and emergency care before and following exit from the program. Compared with leased-up exiters, more nonleased exiters had inpatient stays or emergency care contact 90 days before program exit. After exit, Veterans’ use of inpatient and emergency care either remained flat or declined for both groups of exiters.

Exhibit 7.3 Monthly Outpatient Visits Before and After Exit, HUD-VASH Participants (N=5,876) | mean

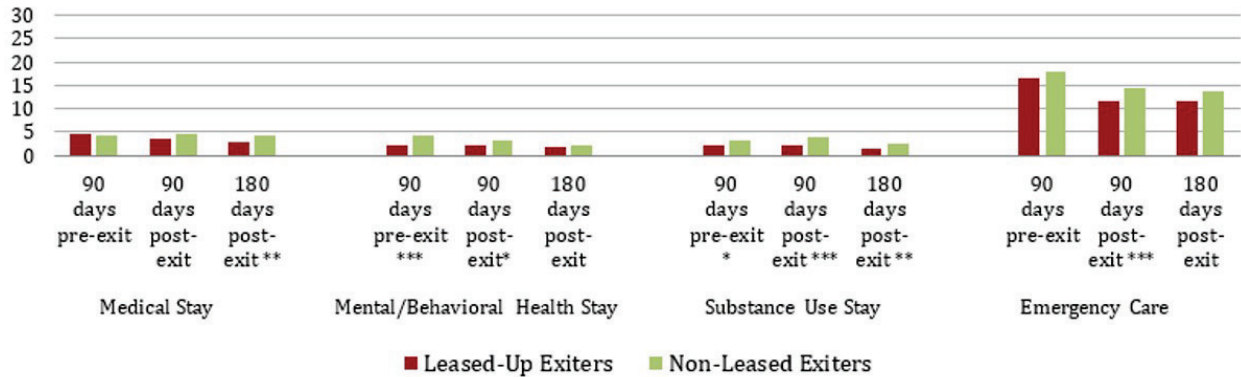


HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Note: Statistical significance is indicated by *p ≤ 0.10, **p ≤ 0.05 and ***p ≤ 0.01.

Source: VA Medical Record

Exhibit 7.4 Inpatient Stays and Emergency Care Before and After Exit, HUD-VASH Participants (N=4,387) | percent



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

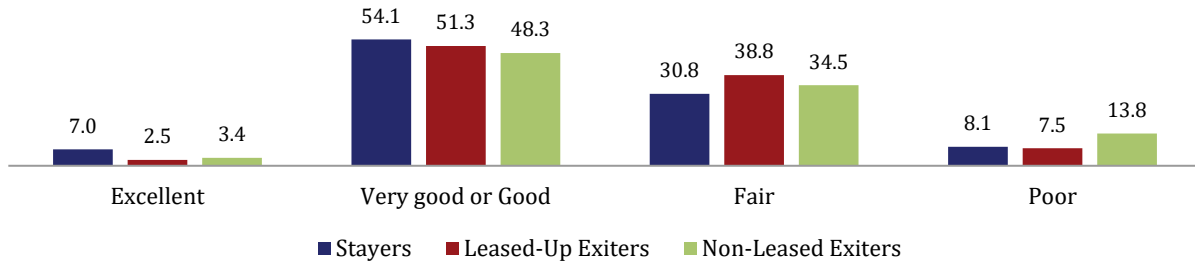
Notes: N includes 2,963 leased-up exitters and 1,424 nonleased exitters. Statistical significance is indicated by *p ≤ 0.10, **p ≤ 0.05, and ***p ≤ 0.01.

Source: VA Medical Record

SELF-REPORTED HEALTH IN HUD-VASH

During in-person interviews, stayers reported the best health while in the program. They were more likely to report excellent, very good, or good health compared with the other study groups. Conversely, nonleased exitters reported the worst health (see exhibit 7.5).

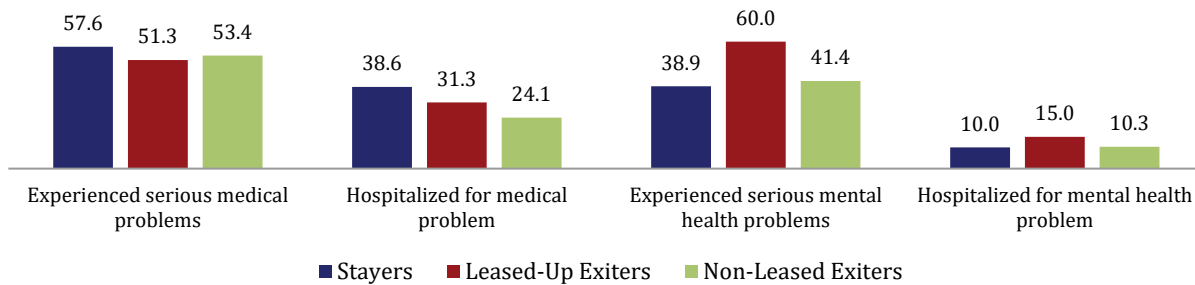
Exhibit 7.5 Self-Reported Health Status, Study Respondents (N=508) | percent



Note: N includes 370 stayers, 80 leased-up exitters, and 58 nonleased exitters.
 Source: Veteran Survey

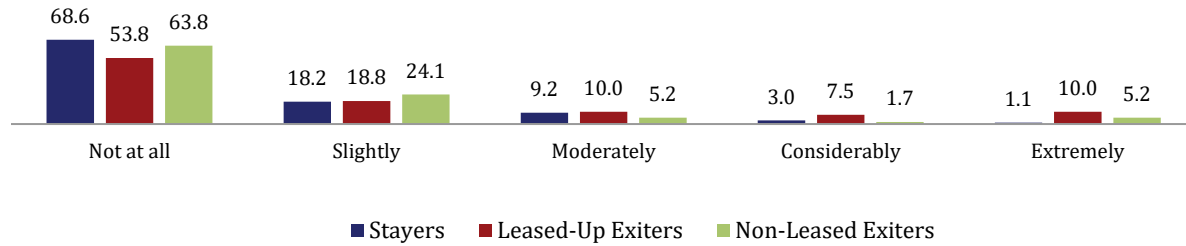
Despite indicating better health overall, stayers were more likely than other groups to report a serious medical problem or to be hospitalized for a medical problem. Nonleased exitters indicated that they had the poorest health and experienced serious medical problems more frequently than did leased-up exitters; however, nonleased exitters were less likely to report being hospitalized for a medical problem. Leased-up exitters were more likely to report experiencing and being hospitalized for serious mental health problems than were the other study groups: three of five leased-up exitters experienced a serious mental health problem while in HUD-VASH, a share about 20 percent higher than for stayers and nonleased exitters. Note that the rates of self-reported inpatient stays are much lower than Veterans’ VA medical records indicate; that may be partly because of recall bias and partly because Veterans responded based on a different time period than is measured in the administrative data see exhibit 7.6).

Exhibit 7.6 Self-Reported Medical and Mental Health Problems, Study Respondents (N=508) | percent



Source: Veteran Survey

More than two-thirds of stayers and a majority of nonleased exitters reported that they were not troubled at all by drugs or alcohol. Nonleased exitters, however, were more likely than stayers to report being extremely troubled. Leased-up exitters reported being most troubled by substances while in HUD-VASH, with more than one-fourth indicating being troubled at least moderately; they were also more than twice as likely as the other groups to indicate being extremely troubled by drugs or alcohol (see exhibit 7.7). Veterans reported receiving drug or alcohol treatment about equally across study groups (about one-fourth indicated they had received inpatient treatment, outpatient treatment, or both), however, although nonleased exitters more frequently reported receiving inpatient treatment (8.6 percent versus 4.1 percent of stayers and 0.0 percent of leased-up exitters).

Exhibit 7.7 Self-Reported Being “Troubled” by Drugs/Alcohol, Study Respondents (N=507) | percent

Note: N includes 369 stayers, 80 leased-up exiters, and 58 nonleased exiters.

Source: Veteran Survey

During qualitative interviews, Veterans discussed the intersection of medical, mental health, and substance abuse issues. They most often described those conditions as barriers to retaining their voucher or housing.

I was going through discovering about my ailments and dealing with losing my kids and wife. I was still trying to work hard, but because my medical conditions kind of kept me from reaching my full potential, I was not into handouts or whatnot. I was not really looking forward to the program. I just got to a point where I had nowhere else to turn. My personal problems caused me to be depressed and my temper was impulsive. (Nonleased exiter—Houston)

I was breaking rules. It was saying that you could not allow people to come and live with you. I had people living with me, friends. I know you are not supposed to do certain things in the unit; I was doing them anyway because of my addiction. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

I get my bouts of depression. Sometimes I will not even go out or go downstairs to retrieve my mail. I just do not want to do anything. I do not want to listen to anything. I just wake up, and I will sit down and I will just—I am just there. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

I don't support pharmaceutical medication as the VA prescribed due to the psychoactive purpose of them, so the medicine that I choose, the more holistic kind, are not really shined upon by society. So that's occasionally an issue with landlords, but usually they don't mention that. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

Conversely, Veterans often described housing as an incentive to address their health and substance abuse problems.

I took it hard. I wanted to pick up the bottle. I wanted to, I wanted to just—everything was going beautiful until that one time. Then I—instead of picking up the bottle again, I went to the VA. I told the doctors, “I need help. I might die tomorrow if I am out there in the streets because I do not know what I am going to do.” I told them all right. They put me in mental health. They kept me there for a few weeks. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

That was my main incentive when I felt like drinking or felt suicidal or felt anything; it was like, “I do not want to lose this.” This was a very good thing. This is very valuable. It meant a lot to me to have my own place. And it was an incentive—or no, more than an incentive—it was like I had reached this goal of having my own place. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

SUMMARY

Around the time of entry in the HUD-VASH program, stayers and leased-up exiters used outpatient care at a higher rate than did nonleased exiters, possibly because those groups were generally more connected to services than were nonleased Veterans. Leased-up and nonleased exiters used inpatient and emergency care at similar rates and were much more likely to use those services compared with stayers, indicating a greater need for more intensive and acute care among exiters.

Comparing the monthly average of outpatient visits during the 90-day period immediately before program entry to the 90-day period immediately preceding program exit indicates that Veterans in both exiter groups had many more outpatient visits and more inpatient stays before program entry than during the period of time leading up to their program exit. Around the time of their exit, nonleased exiters had slightly more frequent visits for outpatient care than did leased-up exiters; however, that fact is not surprising given that leased-up exiters were in permanent housing during that time, which may have increased their access to care. Finally, the number of Veterans in both exiter groups using medical or mental health services decreased over time after their exit from HUD-VASH, suggesting that their needs were being met.

The majority of stayers reported good or better health during their stay in HUD-VASH; nonleased exiters were almost twice as likely as the other groups to report poor health. Stayers, however, were more likely to report having serious medical problems and receiving inpatient medical care during their time in HUD-VASH. Leased-up exiters reported much more frequently that they had a serious mental illness and had been hospitalized for those issues.

CHAPTER 8: EXITS FROM HUD-VASH

To better understand Veterans' exits from HUD-VASH both before and after moving into a housing unit, the research team collected data from administrative records, program staff, and Veterans themselves. Administrative data provided information about Veterans' length of stay in the program, reasons that VA case managers cited for Veterans' exits from the program, and returns to homelessness after exiting the program. Program staff from both local housing authorities and VA case management teams discussed common reasons why Veterans exit HUD-VASH and Veterans described their exiting experiences. Supporting data tables are included in appendix I.

For the purposes of this study, an exit from HUD-VASH means that a Veteran exited HUD-VASH case management and is no longer receiving supportive services from the program (i.e., by leaving one of the two components of the program, the Veteran is considered to have exited). Exit status is indicated by VA case managers in VA administrative data systems; however, there is no indication of whether Veterans who exited case management continued to use their HUD-VASH voucher to subsidize their housing expenses. Therefore, this study did not explore the relationship between an exit from HUD-VASH case management and an exit from voucher-subsidized housing.¹²

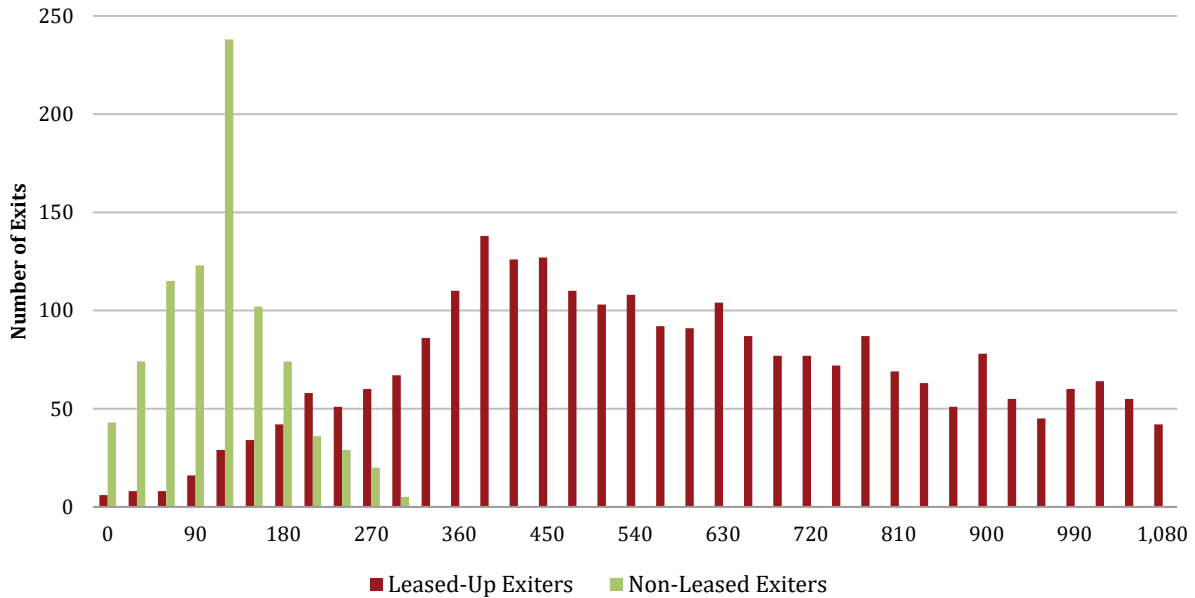
FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF EXITS

Among the 7,383 HUD-VASH participants included in the study sample, 3,088 (41.8 percent) were leased-up exiters who left the program after accessing a housing unit, and 1,507 (20.4 percent) were nonleased exiters who received a voucher but left the program before moving into housing.

Leased-up exiters participated in HUD-VASH for about 2 years (731 days) from voucher issuance to move-in and exit; on average, they remained in their housing units for more than 1 1/2 years (658 days). From voucher issuance to exit, nonleased exiters were in the program approximately 5 months (148 days). Exhibit 8.1 displays the number of HUD-VASH participants who exited the program in 30-day intervals from date of voucher receipt.

¹² In-house analysis conducted in December 2016 by HUD indicates that among 64,000 Veterans who exited HUD-VASH case management nationally between 2008 and 2016, voucher status is unknown for about one quarter; among the 47,000 Veterans for whom voucher status is known, a small proportion (10 percent) ended participation in HUD housing assistance more than 45 days before exiting case management and more than half ended housing assistance within 45 days before or after exiting case management; of the one-third of exiters who continued housing assistance, at least half continued housing assistance for a year or more after exiting case management.

Exhibit 8.1 Days Between Receipt of Voucher and Exit, HUD-VASH Participants (N=3,415) | count



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

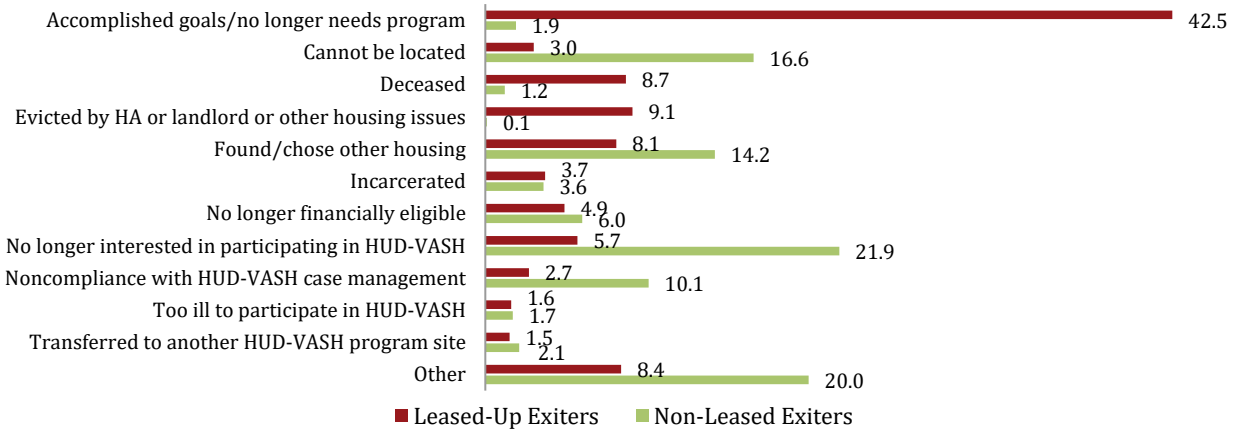
Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Reasons for Exit

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

When a Veteran exits HUD-VASH, VA case managers record in HOMES (the management information system for VA homeless programs) one of the 12 reasons listed in exhibit 8.2 to indicate why the Veteran ended his or her involvement in HUD-VASH case management. According to VA case managers, the most common reason for exit among leased-up exitters is that the Veteran accomplished his or her goals or obtained access to services and no longer needed the program. Eviction or selecting other housing were also identified frequently, although fewer than one in 10 leased-up exitters left the program for either of those reasons. Nonleased exitters were more evenly split across exit categories: VA case managers indicated most commonly that nonleased Veterans left the program because they were no longer interested in participating, followed by being unable to locate the Veteran or the Veteran’s selection of other housing (see exhibit 8.2).

Exhibit 8.2 Reasons for Exits Reported by VA Case Managers, HUD-VASH Participants (N=4,925) | percent



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Note: N includes 3,070 leased-up exiters and 1,855 nonleased exiters.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Program Staff

During site interviews, staff from local housing authorities and VA case management teams described their views about the main reasons for program exit for leased-up and nonleased exiters. Those reasons are outlined in exhibit 8.3.

Detailed descriptions of the most common reasons cited across teams follow.

Challenging Process

Staff in Houston, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia identified the complexity of the application and housing process as reasons for nonleased exits. Staff reported that Veterans may find the process too difficult and fail to follow through. Although several sites have tried to improve the process, they reported that it could still feel intimidating to Veterans.

Incarceration

Staff at each study site mentioned incarceration as a reason for leased-up exits. VA staff in Palo Alto noted that the VA case management team attempts to work with the Veteran so that she or he can remain in the program; however, if the Veteran is incarcerated for an extended period of time, the Veteran must exit the program.

Increase in Income

Staff across the study sites indicated that an increase in income was a positive reason for exiting the program. For leased-up exiters, increases in income may be related to Veterans accessing benefits or obtaining employment, either making them ineligible for the program or making the housing authority’s portion of the rent so small that Veterans voluntarily return their vouchers. For nonleased exiters, an increase in income, typically also through employment or increases to benefits, can make Veterans ineligible for the program.

Exhibit 8.3 Reasons for Exits Identified by Housing Authority and VA Staff

	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	Leased-Up Exitters	Nonleased Exitters	Leased-Up Exitters	Nonleased Exitters	Leased-Up Exitters	Nonleased Exitters	Leased-Up Exitters	Nonleased Exitters
Challenging process	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X
Death	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-
Eviction	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homeownership	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Housing preference	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Incarceration	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	-
Increase in income	X	-	-	X	X	X	X	X
Isolation	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-
Lease or program violations	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	-
Loss of contact	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
Mass briefings	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mental illness	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-
Motivation	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X
Move/port	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Noncompliance with VA case management	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nonpayment of rent	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Personal history (for example, bad credit, poor rental record)	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Problem with housing unit	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Readiness	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	X
SUD	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	-
Unit abandonment	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Voucher as safety net	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Withdrawal	-	-	x	X	x	-	X	-

SUD = substance use disorder. VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Source: Staff Interview

Lease or Program Violations

Veterans who violate lease agreements or program requirements may be evicted from their housing or removed from HUD-VASH, which staff described as a typical reason why leased-up Veterans exit the program. Lease violations may include behavioral issues that cause problems with neighbors or property owners, nonpayment of rent, or people not included on the lease living in a unit, while noncompliance with the housing authority's recertification process is a common program requirement violated by participants. VA case managers indicated that they try to mediate those issues to avoid evictions and program exits. Loss of contact | For leased-up exitters, loss of contact may be related to noncompliance with VA case management (national regulations require that participating Veterans communicate with VA case managers or VA case management teams at least monthly), whereas for nonleased exitters it may simply mean that a Veteran's voucher expired and housing authority staff and VA case managers were unable to assist the Veteran in seeking housing.

Motivation

Program staff indicated that Veterans' motivation, or lack thereof, is a reason why many nonleased exiters do not remain in HUD-VASH; they may not be motivated to complete the processes required to access housing.

Withdrawal

Leased-up exiters often choose to withdraw from the program because they may no longer need VA case management after a long period of housing stability and can pass the voucher on to another Veteran who needs it more. They may also withdraw because they would like to move or seek a residential assistance program or rehabilitation for substance use.

Study Respondents

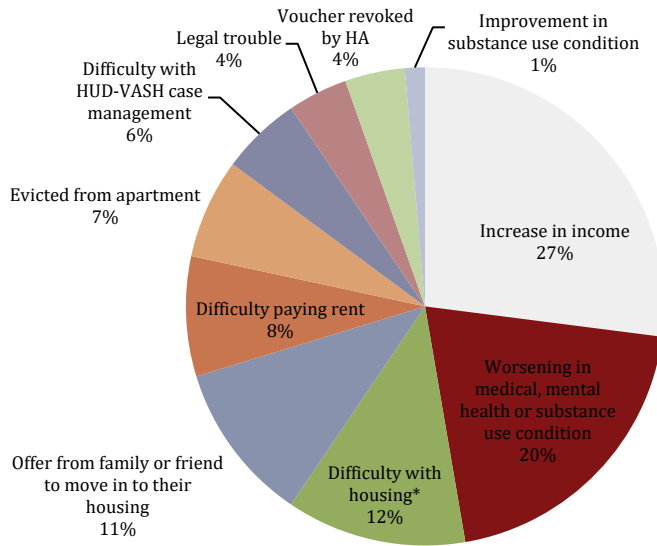
When administering surveys to study respondents, interviewers asked Veterans if they decided to leave the HUD-VASH program or if they were asked to leave. For those who reported that they decided to leave, interviewers asked if respondents had plans for a place to live after they left the program. About three in five exiters in both groups reported that they decided to leave HUD-VASH (58.4 percent of leased-up exiters and 57.9 percent of nonleased exiters). Among those who decided to leave, the majority of both groups had plans for their living arrangement following exit (84.3 percent of leased-up exiters and 72.2 percent of nonleased exiters).

Interviewers then presented study respondents with a list of situations that could have contributed to their leaving HUD-VASH (e.g., issues with housing or personal circumstances, such as changes in income or health). Veterans were asked which situation best matched the main reason that they left the HUD-VASH program and which additional factors also contributed to their exit.

The most common reason for exit reported by leased-up exiters was an increase in income; the 27 percent of respondents who indicated this also reported that an improvement in medical, mental health, and substance use conditions contributed to their exit from HUD-VASH. Conversely, the second most common reason for exit among this group was a decline in these conditions. Respondents who reported a decline in health (20.3 percent) as the primary reason for exit also reported that housing issues, such as difficulty paying the rent or eviction, contributed to their exit. Leased-up exiters reported difficulty with housing (i.e., dissatisfaction with the neighborhood or apartment and conflict with the landlord or neighbors) as the third most common reason for exit, citing eviction and an increase in income as factors that contributed to their exits. (See exhibit 8.4.)

Nonleased exiters most often reported that challenges associated with finding housing were their main reasons for exiting the program prior to moving into a housing unit. Nonleased exiters most commonly indicated that having the voucher revoked by the housing authority was the main reason for their exit. These Veterans also indicated that they were unable to find an apartment to rent with the voucher and were dissatisfied with available apartments. The second most common category of exit among nonleased respondents was difficulty with housing (i.e., dissatisfaction with available apartments, inability to find an apartment to rent with the voucher, or the apartment did not pass inspection); other contributing factors included having insufficient funds to pay for the security deposit or furniture. Finally, the third most common reason for exit among this group was an offer from family or friends to move into their housing; lack of money for move-in costs contributed to some Veterans making this decision. (See exhibit 8.5.)

Exhibit 8.4 Main Reason for Exit Reported by Leased-up Exitters, Study Respondents (N=74) | percent

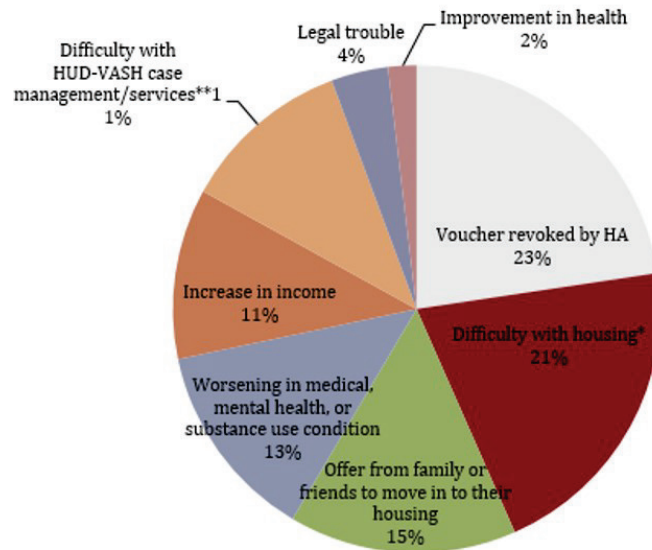


HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Note: *Difficulty with housing includes conflict with landlord, conflict with neighbors, dissatisfaction with apartment, and dissatisfaction with neighborhood.

Source: Veteran Survey

Exhibit 8.5 Main Reason for Exit Reported by Nonleased Exitters, Study Respondents (N=53) | percent



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Note: *Difficulty with housing includes dissatisfaction with available apartments, inability to find an apartment to rent with the voucher, and apartment did not pass housing authority inspection. **Difficulty with HUD-VASH case management/services includes conflict with HUD-VASH case manager or program staff and disagreement with program rules.

Source: Veteran Survey

Qualitative Respondents

Leased-up and nonleased exiters discussed their exit from HUD-VASH in greater detail during qualitative interviews. Most qualitative respondents cited a series of experiences and multiple factors that precipitated their exit. Exhibit 8.6 lists common reasons for exit. Leased-up exiters most frequently cited problems with the program, eviction, or financial issues. Nonleased exiters listed as important factors in their exit that their voucher had expired; financial issues; lack of or dissatisfaction with available housing; offers from family or friends to move into their housing; and worsening in medical, mental health, or substance use conditions.

Exhibit 8.6 Reasons for Exit, Qualitative Respondents

Leased-up exiters	Nonleased exiters
Arrest	Arrest
Disagreement/problem with program	Disagreement/problem with program
Dissatisfaction with unit/conflict with property owner	Disputed housing area or type
Eviction	Eligibility issues (homelessness status, income)
Financial issues	Enrollment issues
Housing authority issues	Financial issues
Increase in income	Increase in income
Medical concerns	Inspection issue
Moved in with family or friend	Lack of housing options/dissatisfaction with units
Noncompliance with housing authority rules	Medical or mental health concerns
Recertification problem	Moved in with family or friend
Substance use	Substance use
VA case management issue/noncompliance	Voucher expired while dealing with personal circumstances
Voucher expired before new unit found	

VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.
 Source: Veteran Interview

Disagreement/Problem with Program

One of the most frequent factors contributing to program exit was issues with the HUD-VASH program. Leased-up exiters referenced VA case management issues (for example, being noncompliant with the VA case management requirement and personal issues with individual VA case managers), as well as problems with the housing authority (for example, not complying with program rules, such as including all tenants on the lease). They further described HUD-VASH requirements as burdensome. One Veteran indicated that “it didn’t make sense to keep dealing with them” for the \$100 voucher payment (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles), and another indicated that difficulty with recertification led to the voucher being revoked and the Veteran was unable to remain in the housing unit without rental assistance. Nonleased exiters described problems with enrollment, including lost paperwork and communication issues with HUD-VASH staff, as well as concerns over continued eligibility, with one Veteran fearful that working would put his or her income over the maximum for eligibility.

Well, now the reason why, and this is one thing that really sort of perplexed me—the reason why I lost my voucher was because I was over here. I had a doctor’s appointment. And I guess it was basically around the same time that I had that voucher reinstatement thing. But I’m like, “Okay, if I’m in the voucher program and I get certified, why should I

have to go through recertification over and over and over?” It’s difficult. I’m a single parent without transportation, and it’s like, “Are you kidding me? I got to lug my child out here in the cold?” And I was like, “I’m not going to do it.” (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

I was on the phone with them. The VASH chick did not know. The VASH’s boss did not know. The public housing authority did not know. I found out by the time my voucher was expired—they had an answer for me. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

Eviction and Financial Issues

A substantial number of leased-up exiters left their HUD-VASH units following eviction. Reasons for eviction were complex and often intersected with financial problems, legal trouble, and substance use. One Veteran never paid the security deposit, even after 17 months of living in a unit, reporting that it was because the Veteran was “actively into” an addiction (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto). Others did not pay rent because of changes in employment or benefits payments, the death of a fiduciary, or arrest. Substantial rent increases or changes to the amount paid through the voucher also caused difficulties. More than one Veteran described making rent payments for an incorrect amount and being unable to afford the back rent and late fees when the oversight came to light. One Veteran resorted to illegal activities in an attempt to get money for rent and avoid eviction. Veterans who were evicted described losing everything and sometimes ending up on the street.

She said, “Well, you need to call Section 8. You need to talk to the landlord.” I explained to her, “Both of us or you would do better than just me, because they are not trying to hear anything that I have to say.” Anyway, she didn’t do it. I have a bipolar condition. I can’t take pressure. I wound up being 302 for about a month. This is without pay. I got out of the hospital, took a spill—I slipped. Anyway, I slipped; that was like another month and a half out of work. That is like close to 3 months out of work without pay. Now, I got the eviction notice, which I gave to the case manager. I said, “I would really appreciate it if you would come down to the court with me.” She didn’t come down there. I went down to Section 8. They were telling the judge that I owed them back rent and they didn’t want to hear anything about the letter. I had the letter with me. About 2 weeks later, me and my son got evicted. I lost everything I had, and as a direct result of that, both of us were sleeping in my car for about 3 weeks. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

[My mother] was diagnosed with cancer and she passed away 2 weeks later. It was just so quick. I did not get a chance to call or set up another arrangement. When she passed away, I was still getting the hard checks. I was calling every other week. They said they already processed it. I kept calling and calling. They finally told me to stop calling. I said I could not stop calling; I could not get evicted. Nobody wanted to help me. It took 3 or 4 months before they even assigned a new fiduciary person to come. That took another 2 months. I even asked if there was a protocol or something, if there was an emergency, in case of this happening. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

It had changed so much. At one time, I owed them \$4,000, because they said PHA had went up. First my rent was \$38. I was paying that, paying that, paying that. I got locked up. Me and my girlfriend had a little misunderstanding and the cops locked me up for all of August. When I got out, I called my landlord to tell them the reason why I didn’t pay the

rent was because I was locked up. They told me that I owed them \$4,000 because my rent had went up to \$138, not \$38. But I'd been paying them \$38 since I got on unemployment. And I find out that PHA went up without really—when I already let them know that I wasn't working. I'm collecting unemployment, but I had no problem paying that \$38 with my unemployment check, so that's what I kept doing. Now it's September and they sent me this bill from February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, at \$138. They didn't even say \$100—I did pay \$38, you know—but they got \$138, \$138, \$138, \$138, \$138, and late fees, too—came to like \$4,000-something. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

I have not seen her since before I was evicted, I think, because I had lost contact with her almost 2 months before I was evicted, because I was locked out by the sheriffs. And, what happened was the landlord had served me a 3-day notice after I did not have the money for the month in advance, and he rejected the 2 months. He served a three-day notice, and I got no further paperwork stating when to come to court or anything. Two weeks later, I am locked out of my apartment. So, I had no way of getting paperwork or any of the papers to try to contact my worker here at the VA. So, we lost contact briefly because of that. And, I got desperate and tried to make the money illicitly, because I did not want to lose my place. And, that is how I wound up getting locked up. So, it has all been a nightmare. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

I was devastated, I was. Because I lost everything, like I said—my TV, my furniture, my appliances. I lost everything. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

Voucher Expired

Voucher expiration was the main reason that nonleased Veterans exited HUD-VASH. Respondents described many underlying reasons for voucher expiration; however, the reasons were overwhelmingly negative. Only one Veteran no longer required rental assistance and allowed the voucher to expire. Others had negative experiences with the program or could not find an appropriate unit to rent and decided not to move forward. Some described not being able to afford a unit even with the voucher, or personal issues, such as mental health issues or substance use, that kept them from engaging in the program and finding a unit.

I just went and said here's your voucher and all of that. I just told them, "Thank you, but I don't need this right now at this present time. You couldn't help, and I can move on and give the voucher to somebody else that is much more in-need than I am." (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

I hated doing that, because I went so far along to get to where I was, and it was not an easy thing to do. I changed my mind. I went over to the housing office, and they were really nice about that too. She's like, "Well, okay. I'll just cancel all of the vouchers and everything." And I said, "Maybe somebody else needs it and can do it, because I'm okay now." She said, "If you ever need to reapply, just go through your VASH person and they will be there." So it wasn't difficult getting out of it—it's just I felt kind of guilty. I went so far. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

When I decided to leave, I just explained to my VASH worker what had happened and I just decided that it would be best for me just to find a place on my own because [of all of the paperwork], I just did not want to go through that again. I just thought it was easier for

me to just deal on my own as opposed to dealing with the process. I did not know that I could do it all over again or continue. So I just said that I would just leave it alone for a minute 'cause that was a pretty draining experience for me. And I just did not want to, at that point, I just did not want to continue anymore—to deal with it. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

Your voucher is based on the percentage of disability that you receive. At the end of the month, once I received my check, I still was not able to afford it. I received a voucher for a two bedroom and [had] difficulties finding a two bedroom that was suitable for my family, my two boys. Because of financial purposes, my case manager advised me to go to a one bedroom. I went back to the housing authority to get an extension and get a voucher for a one bedroom. I turned in my paperwork and never received a call back about it. Once I followed up on it, I was told that I was kicked out of the program and I had to start all over again. (Nonleased exiter—Houston)

I was feeding my addiction and I didn't come back for about 2 months. I fell off the grid. I just went on with my addiction for a while—drinking. I lost contact with everybody. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

CHARACTERISTICS PREDICTING EXIT

To determine characteristics that may predict whether a Veteran exits HUD-VASH, the research team ran two logistic regressions: the first one modeled whether a Veteran who moved into HUD-VASH housing later exited the program (that is, whether the Veteran was considered a leased-up exiter or a stayer), and the second modeled, among exiters, whether the Veteran exited the program before leasing a housing unit. A detailed description of the methods for this analysis is included in appendix C.

Exhibit 8.7 provides results from the two logistic regressions. The first panel lists the odds ratios for characteristics that were associated with Veterans exiting the program after accessing housing; in addition to several control variables (that is, study site and male sex), having a service-connected disability increased the odds by 37 percent that Veterans who moved into housing would exit. The second panel lists the odds ratios for characteristics that were associated with Veterans exiting the program after receiving a voucher but before accessing housing; in this case, a diagnosis of PTSD increased the odds by 25 percent that a Veteran would exit HUD-VASH before moving into a unit.

Exhibit 8.7 Logistic Regression Modeling Exits From HUD-VASH, HUD-VASH Participants

	Leased-Up Exit vs. Stay N=5,850		Nonleased vs. Leased-Up Exit N=4,565	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Houston	2.65	2.32–3.03	0.38	0.33–0.45
Palo Alto	2.90	2.48–3.40	0.55	0.46–0.65
Philadelphia	0.58	0.47–0.71	0.83	0.62–1.11
Age	0.99	0.99–1.00	0.99	0.99–1.00
Male	1.22	1.02–1.46	1.09	0.87–1.36
White	1.01	0.90–1.14	1.54	1.35–1.77
Other race	1.03	0.81–1.32	1.45	1.12–1.89
Service-connected disability	1.37	1.22–1.53	0.93	0.82–1.07
PTSD	—	—	1.25	1.01–1.56

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. CI = confidence interval. OR = odds ratio. PTSD = post-traumatic stress disorder.

Notes: Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability; PTSD—No diagnosis; Schizophrenia—No diagnosis. Statistical significance is indicated by bold font ($p \leq 0.05$).

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System; VA Medical Record

PROFILES OF EXITERS

To better understand and describe Veterans who exited HUD-VASH and the nature of their exit, the research team conducted a series of latent class analyses (LCAs). This type of analysis uses data that describe the study sample—in this case, demographics, health conditions, reason for exiting the program—to group the members of the study sample into subgroups. The results describe the heterogeneity among exiters, which is useful in understanding how the characteristics and circumstances of exits may vary greatly within the population of exiters, informing potential policy and practice responses tailored to Veterans who meet a certain profile. A detailed description of the methods for this analysis is included in appendix C.

Exhibits 8.8 and 8.9 describe the subgroups or classes of leased and nonleased exiters, arranged in order of most to least successful exits. Classes where a majority of Veterans exited the program because they had accomplished their goals or became financially ineligible—possibly related to an increase in income through employment or some other means—are considered more successful than classes where decidedly negative exit reasons such as eviction or incarceration are more common.

Exhibit 8.8 describes five classes of leased-up exiters. The first three classes varied demographically, but those Veterans generally left HUD-VASH because they had accomplished their goals or became financially ineligible. The smallest and least successful class of Veterans had high needs and little income and used acute or intensive services more frequently; those Veterans tended to exit the program for reasons such as noncompliance or incarceration. (See exhibit 8.10 for details).

Exhibit 8.9 describes the three classes of nonleased exiters. Approximately one-fourth of nonleased exiters seemed to have few needs, had access to income, and left the program before accessing housing as a result of other opportunities. The other two classes seemed to have a range of needs and left the program for a variety of reasons, least frequently because they had accomplished their goals (see exhibit 8.11 for details).

Exhibit 8.8 Profiles of Leased-Up Exiters, HUD-VASH Participants (N=2,959) | percent

	Demographics	Clinical Characteristics	Reasons for Exit
Class 1 20.9%	Younger Female SC disability	Low rates of chronic medical and behavioral health conditions	Accomplished goals Found other housing Financially ineligible
Class 2 16.4%	Older Male No SC disability	Low rates of chronic medical and behavioral health conditions	Accomplished goals
Class 3 16.6%	Middle-aged Male & female SC disability	High rates of behavioral health conditions; chronic medical conditions	Accomplished goals Financially ineligible
Class 4 32.2%	Older Male No SC disability	Low rates of chronic medical and behavioral health conditions	Accomplished goals Lost contact, incarcerated Non-compliance, eviction
Class 5 13.9%	Older Male No SC disability	High rates of chronic medical and behavioral health conditions, inpatient care	Lost contact, incarcerated Non-compliance, eviction

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Exhibit 8.9 Profiles of Nonleased Exiters, HUD-VASH Participants (N=1,037) | percent

Class 1 25.2%	Younger Female SC disability	Low rates of mental\behavioral health and/or substance abuse problems	Found housing elsewhere Were no longer interested in HUD-VASH
Class 2 44.9%	Older Male No SC disability	Low rates of mental/behavioral health and/or substance abuse problems	Typically did not accomplish goals
Class 3 29.9%	Younger to middle-aged Male No SC disability or >50% disability	High rates of mental/behavioral health and/or substance abuse problems Use of inpatient care prior to exit	Loss of contact (with VA) Illness Incarceration

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Taken together, the two LCAs describe three categories of exiters. The most successful leased-up exiters and nonleased exiters had similar profiles: younger, black, female Veterans with a service-connected disability who had minimal medical problems or mental, or behavioral health problems and demonstrated that they no longer needed the program. The least successful Veterans in the two exiter groups also shared several characteristics: those Veterans less frequently had a service-connected disability but had very high rates of medical, mental or behavioral health, or substance use conditions and somewhat frequent use of inpatient care before exiting HUD-VASH, often exiting because they were unable to be located, ill, or incarcerated. A third category of exiters—consistent with leased-up exiter class 4 and nonleased exiter class 2—were also similar: older, black, male Veterans without a service-connected disability, who were less successful than Veterans in other classes, and who typically did not leave HUD-VASH for positive reasons.

Exhibit 8.10 Latent Class Analysis of Leased-Up Exiters, HUD-VASH Participants

	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3		Class 4		Class 5	
	N=666, 20.9%		N=536, 16.4%		N=507, 16.6%		N=833, 32.2%		N=417, 13.9%	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Study site										
Houston	316	47.5	0	0.0	199	39.3	352	42.3	122	29.3
Los Angeles	268	40.3	172	32	147	29.0	429	51.5	173	41.5
Palo Alto	45	6.7	364	68	151	29.8	0	0.0	88	21.1
Philadelphia	37	5.5	0	0.0	10	1.9	52	6.2	34	8.2
Gender										
Female	223	33.5	24	4.5	66	13.0	8	1.0	5	1.2
Male	443	66.5	512	95.5	441	87.0	825	99.0	412	98.9
Age										
<35	230	34.6	30	5.6	77	15.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
35-44	194	29.1	41	7.6	100	19.8	22	2.7	1	0.2
45-54	150	22.5	205	38.3	200	39.5	302	36.2	146	35.1
55-64	90	13.5	196	36.5	115	22.7	418	50.2	239	57.3
≥65	2	0.3	64	11.9	15	3.0	92	11.0	31	7.4
Race										
Black	478	71.7	169	31.6	234	46.2	592	71.1	224	53.6
White	161	24.1	322	60.0	233	45.9	197	23.7	181	43.3
Other	28	4.2	46	8.5	40	7.9	44	5.3	13	3.1
Enrollment priority group										
≥50% service-connected disability	314	47.2	102	19.1	251	49.5	78	9.4	51	12.3
<50% service-connected disability	145	21.8	84	15.6	107	21.2	133	16.0	58	14.0
No service-connected disability	168	25.3	321	59.8	134	26.4	558	67.0	286	68.5
Other	38	5.7	29	5.5	15	2.9	63	7.6	22	5.2
Medical conditions and mental or behavioral health conditions and service use										
Any medical condition	37	5.5	75	14	247	48.8	130	15.6	343	82.2
Any mental health condition	34	5.1	41	7.7	415	81.9	53	6.4	316	75.7
Any substance use condition	23	3.4	53	9.8	401	79.1	142	17.1	354	84.8
Any inpatient stay before exit	13	2.0	31	5.8	45	8.9	75	9.0	103	24.8
VA case managers' reason for exit										
Accomplished goals	282	42.4	349	65.1	237	46.7	314	37.7	80	19.1
Cannot be located, too ill, incarcerated, or deceased	28	4.2	62	11.6	47	9.2	197	23.6	166	39.8
No longer financially eligible	69	10.3	6	1.2	58	11.5	11	1.3	1	0.3
Noncompliant with VA case management or evicted	87	13.1	27	5.1	41	8.1	111	13.3	86	20.6
Transferred to another HUD-VASH program or found other housing	91	13.6	31	5.8	55	10.8	77	9.3	30	7.3
Unhappy with housing or no longer interested in participating	52	7.8	24	4.4	37	7.3	47	5.6	26	6.3
Other	58	8.7	38	7	77	9.2	28	6.6	32	6.4

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System; VA Medical Record

Exhibit 8.11 Latent Class Analysis of Nonleased Exiters, HUD-VASH Participants

	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3	
	N=273, 25.2%		N=451, 44.9%		N=313, 29.9%	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Study site						
Houston	54	19.9	66	14.7	46	14.7
Los Angeles	176	64.5	298	66.1	180	57.5
Palo Alto	35	13.0	73	16.1	73	23.3
Philadelphia	7	2.6	16	3.5	14	4.5
Gender						
Female	79	28.8	7	1.5	11	3.4
Male	194	71.2	444	98.5	303	96.7
Age group						
<35	95	34.9	10	2.3	49	15.5
35-44	89	32.6	16	3.5	33	10.6
45-54	52	19.2	150	33.3	102	32.5
55-64	37	13.4	200	44.3	113	36.0
≥65	0	0.0	75	16.6	17	5.5
Race						
Black	130	47.6	230	51.0	116	37.1
White	105	38.4	206	45.7	171	54.7
Other	38	14.1	15	3.3	26	8.2
Enrollment priority group						
≥50% SC	124	45.3	53	11.8	104	33.2
<50% SC	78	28.6	68	15.0	50	16.1
No SC	64	23.4	294	65.2	148	47.4
Other	7	2.7	36	8.0	11	3.4
Medical conditions and mental or behavioral health conditions and service use						
Any medical condition	18	6.5	62	13.8	203	64.8
Any mental health condition	26	9.5	17	3.8	271	86.6
Any substance use condition	11	4.0	38	8.4	270	86.2
Any inpatient stay before exit	27	6.0	75	24.0	15	5.4
VA case managers' reason for exit						
Accomplished goals	10	3.5	9	1.9	4	1.2
Cannot be located, too ill, incarcerated, or deceased	38	14.1	124	27.6	99	31.6
No longer financially eligible	17	6.1	18	4.0	8	2.6
Noncompliant with VA case management or evicted	37	13.6	55	12.1	41	13.2
Transferred to another HUD-VASH program or found other housing	61	22.5	71	15.7	49	15.6
Unhappy with housing or no longer interested in participating	56	20.6	93	20.7	57	18.1
Other	54	19.7	81	17.9	55	17.7

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. SC = service-connected disability.

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System; VA Medical Record

VETERANS' STATUS AFTER EXIT

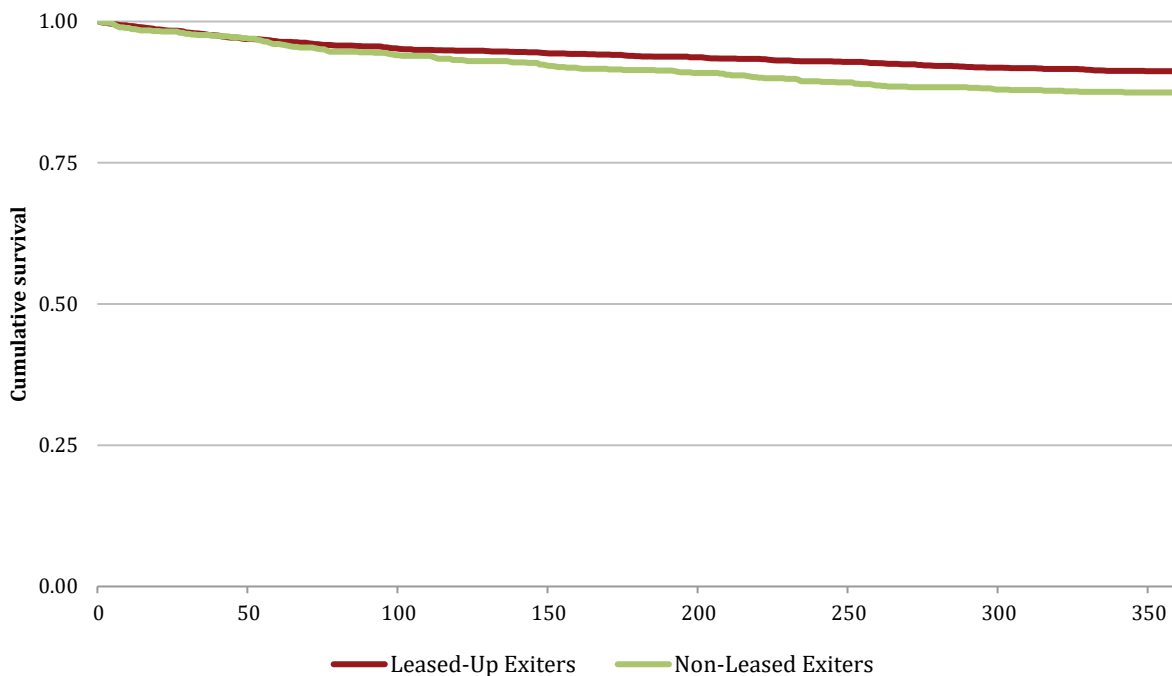
At the time of program exit, Veterans exited HUD-VASH case management; however, 17.7 percent of leased-up exiters and 10.7 percent of nonleased exiters reported during surveys that they received assistance from their VA case manager in finding a place to stay after they exited the program. Fewer than one in five study respondents reported having ongoing contact with their VA case manager (16.5 percent of leased-up exiters and 18.2 percent of nonleased exiters), but the majority planned to continue using VA services after their exit from HUD-VASH (94.9 percent of leased-up exiters and 96.5 percent of nonleased exiters).

RETURNS TO HOMELESSNESS

Returns to VA Homeless Programs

HUD-VASH participants who exited the program could use VA homeless programs after their exit. Exhibit 8.12 illustrates the proportion of Veterans who exited HUD-VASH and returned to homelessness during the year after exiting the program. Almost 93 percent of leased-up exiters and 90 percent of nonleased exiters did not return to VA homeless programs during the observation period. Veterans may have accessed other community-based homelessness assistance programs; however, the research team did not have access to data related to local Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) or unsheltered homelessness.

Exhibit 8.12 Avoiding Returns to VA Homeless Programs 360 Days After Exit, HUD-VASH Participants (N=4,595) | count



HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

The results of the Cox Proportional Hazards survival analysis presented in exhibit 8.13 indicate factors associated with Veterans’ return to a VA homeless program after exiting HUD-VASH. The hazard ratios indicate that, compared with leased-up exiters, nonleased exiters were more likely to return to homelessness. Women were significantly less likely than men to return to homelessness. Veterans with a service-connected disability were less likely to return to homelessness following program exit, whereas those with a drug abuse disorder were more likely to return to homelessness following program exit. A detailed description of the methods for this analysis is included in appendix C.

Exhibit 8.13 Cox Proportional Hazards Survival Analysis for Time To Return to Homelessness Within 360 Days, HUD-VASH Participants (N = 303)

	Estimate	Standard Error	Hazard Ratio	p
Houston	-0.261	0.144	0.770	0.070
Palo Alto	-0.314	0.160	0.731	0.050
Philadelphia	0.060	0.246	1.062	0.807
Nonleased exiters	0.371	0.121	1.449	0.002
Age	-0.007	0.006	0.993	0.183
Male	0.563	0.258	1.757	0.029
White	-0.117	0.126	0.890	0.353
Other race	-0.069	0.245	0.934	0.779
Service-connected disability	-0.339	0.122	0.713	0.006
Drug abuse	0.859	0.118	2.360	0.000

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Notes: Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Study group—Leased-up exiters; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability; Drug abuse condition—No diagnosis. Statistical significance is indicated by bold font (p ≤ 0.05).

Source: VA Medical Record

Returns to HUD-VASH

Very few HUD-VASH participants returned to HUD-VASH after an initial exit (N = 11, 0.2 percent). During qualitative interviews, some Veterans noted that they would return to the program if they received better VA case management or housing options in other geographic areas. Several nonleased exiters were not interested in returning to HUD-VASH, however, because it did not suit their current housing needs or did not work well for them.

I have nothing bad to say about HUD-VASH, nothing. They did what they were supposed to do. I, on the other hand, didn’t get a chance to really do what I was supposed to do. I didn’t make the meetings. I didn’t make the recertification. So, you know, I’m just going to have to swallow that pill. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

If it was an opportunity where I could have grown some more intellectually, morally, or socially. All those things are important. To stay in the program—to continue to help a Veteran, I would have stayed in. If they would have had more options—I had to keep going on and doing what I had to do. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

[I would need] someone that actually followed through. Maybe not like every week, but at least a phone call every other week, like, “Okay, over the last week, how many places did

you go to? How many of them accept Section 8? Did you find any that you like?" I never got that. It was always like, wait, wait, call. I haven't heard from her in 2 months and, "Are you still my caseworker?" It got to the point where it felt like that I had a piece of paper and a nice little wave goodbye and the middle finger saying, "FU. Go have fun." (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

SUMMARY

Among HUD-VASH participants at each of the four study sites, 37.8 percent were considered stayers, 41.8 percent leased-up exiters, and 20.4 percent nonleased exiters. Leased-up exiters remained in the program for an average of 658 days, or a little less than 2 years, whereas nonleased exiters participated in the program—from receipt of voucher to exit—for almost 5 months.

Several factors were associated with HUD-VASH participants not staying in the program. Veterans with a service-connected disability were more likely to exit the program after being housed. Veterans who had a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were more likely to leave the program after they received a HUD-VASH voucher but before accessing permanent housing. Study respondents provided evidence that having a helpful VA case manager who agreed with the Veteran's goals increased the likelihood that the Veteran would obtain housing and stay in the program for at least several years; having a diagnosis of depression or schizophrenia decreased that likelihood.

VA case managers and Veterans identified a number of reasons why Veterans exited the HUD-VASH program. According to VA case managers, the majority of leased-up exiters left their HUD-VASH housing unit because they had accomplished their goals, found other housing, or were no longer eligible for the program. Nonleased exiters, on the other hand, were no longer interested in the program, could not be located, or found other housing before leasing a unit with their voucher.

Study respondents also provided information on their reason for leaving HUD-VASH. Leased-up exiters most frequently reported an increase in income as the main reason for their exit—which would be considered a success as these Veterans were able to live independently—but worsening in a medical, mental health, or substance use condition and difficulties with housing were also common among this group. Nonleased exiters most commonly cited having the voucher revoked by the housing authority or challenges with finding housing, including dissatisfaction with available units and not being able to find a unit to rent with the voucher, which qualitative respondents described as often leading to their voucher expiring before they could access housing. Nonleased exiters also commonly received offers from friends or family to move into their housing, particularly when they didn't have money for move-in costs.

To better understand program exits, the research team identified profiles of types of exiters, with three types emerging among both leased-up and nonleased Veterans:

1. Younger, female Veterans with a service-connected disability who had minimal medical problems or mental, or behavioral problems and demonstrated that they no longer needed the program.
2. Older, male Veterans without a service-connected disability who exited HUD-VASH for reasons other than accomplishing their goals or identified housing that was a better fit.

3. Veterans who had lower levels of service-connected disabilities but very high rates of medical, mental or behavioral health, and substance use conditions; somewhat frequently used inpatient care; and often left the program because they could not be located, were ill, or were incarcerated.

After their exit from the program, the vast majority of Veterans—almost 93 percent of leased-up exiters and 90 percent of nonleased exiters—did not return to VA homeless programs within 1 year. Nonleased exiters were more likely to return to homelessness, as were Veterans with a substance use disorder. Having a service-connected disability, which indicates that the Veteran is receiving cash benefits, seemed to be a protective factor.

CHAPTER 9: PROGRAM FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

During site visits, the research team elicited perspectives from local housing authority and VA case management staff on program facilitators and barriers. Veterans' views on those topics were gathered during qualitative interviews. In addition, program staff and Veterans offered their recommendations for how to improve HUD-VASH.

FACILITATORS

Program Staff Perspectives

The research team asked housing authority and VA staff from each study site what they believed facilitated successful outcomes in the HUD-VASH program. Responses included facilitators based on communication and collaboration, program processes and staffing, and Veterans' relationships with program staff. The facilitators identified by each study site are shown in exhibit 9.1. This section provides further detail on the most common facilitators mentioned across all sites.

Collaboration with Community Partners

In Houston, community partners have been essential in reaching citywide goals to end homelessness. In Palo Alto, community-based organizations are integral to every step of HUD-VASH, including identifying Veterans experiencing homelessness through outreach efforts, as well as providing medical services, transportation, and financial move-in assistance. Staff in Philadelphia noted that community connections, such as co-locating HUD and VA services at the Veterans Multi-Service Center and maintaining relationships with community service providers and local property owners, have been invaluable to Veterans served through HUD-VASH.

Connecting Veterans to Wrap-Around Services and Community Resources

In Los Angeles, the VA case management teams include a nurse who can help Veterans with ongoing medical issues, sometimes directly in their homes. In Palo Alto, HUD-VASH offers Veterans the opportunity to participate in life skills groups that help them get and stay housed. The Philadelphia VA team described housing, peer support, and substance use disorder (SUD) specialists as vital to their team, as well as community resources that assist Veterans interested in furthering their education or finding employment or volunteer work that may help them transition out of HUD-VASH.

HUD-VASH Boot Camps

Houston, Palo Alto, and Philadelphia described the utility of participating in HUD-VASH Boot Camps that bring HUD, VA, and community providers together to collaborate and discover better ways to serve Veterans.

Program Flexibility

Staff mentioned that program flexibility is key to facilitating faster housing outcomes for Veterans. The Houston Housing Authority (HHA), for example, has a waiver that enables the housing authority to pay up to 110 percent Fair Market Rents (FMR) in opportunity areas, enabling Veterans to move to areas that often have better schools and more community resources. The Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA) also described flexibility in

regulatory requirements for HUD-VASH participants that have allowed them to eliminate unnecessary or redundant processes, making the program easier to navigate. Likewise, the Housing Authority of the City of Camden (HACC) indicated that their smaller size allows the housing authority to have more flexibility to tailor the services they offer to Veterans.

Exhibit 9.1 Program Facilitators Identified by Housing Authority and VA Staff

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Community collaboration				
Collaboration with community partners	X	-	X	X
Connecting Veteran to wraparound services and community resources	-	X	X	X
HUD and VA collaboration				
Co-location of housing authority and VA case management	X	-	-	-
Communication between HUD and VA	-	-	X	X
HUD-VASH Boot Camps	X	-	X	X
One main point of contact between HUD and VA	-	-	-	X
Program processes				
Decrease in initial voucher issuance period	-	-	-	X
Decrease in time to housing (preparing Veteran for housing search, decreasing process times)	-	X	-	-
Group meetings (housing groups, life skills)	-	-	X	-
Opportunity areas within housing authority jurisdiction	X	-	-	-
Preinspected units	-	-	-	X
Program flexibility	X	X	-	X
Streamlined internal processes (one core application across housing authorities, prioritizing Veteran applicants, daily VA case management huddles)	-	X	X	X
VA case management				
VA case manager as advocate/intermediary	X	-	X	-
VA case manager assisting with application or advising during meetings with housing authority	-	-	X	-
Motivational interviewing	-	X	X	-
Smaller VA caseloads	-	-	-	X
VA specialists (employment, housing, peer support, SUD)	X	-	X	X
Veteran relationship with program staff	X	X	-	X
Veteran strengths				
Veteran motivation	X	-	-	-

HUD = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Source: Staff Interview

Streamlined Internal Processes

HACLA and HACoLA have worked to create a single, uniform HUD-VASH application, which makes it easier for VA staff to assist Veterans in completing the application and providing necessary documents. Similarly, VA staff complete the voucher application for the Housing Authority of the county of Monterey (HACM), making turnaround time shorter for HUD-VASH participants than for other households served by the housing authority, and the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) provides VA and Veterans with checklists to ensure that all application materials are clear and completed correctly.

VA Specialists

Staff in Houston, Palo Alto, and Philadelphia mentioned the value of VA specialists trained to assist Veterans in specific areas. Those VA case management teams rely on VA specialists in employment, housing, peer support, and SUD to provide Veterans with individualized services.

Veterans' Relationship With Program Staff

Building a relationship of trust between Veterans and program staff is integral to Veterans' success in HUD-VASH. Housing stability often is an outcome of that relationship because VA staff can assist Veterans with issues and, as staff in Houston described, Veterans who have good contact and communication with VA staff often follow program rules and requirements. Los Angeles further indicated that the VA team environment provided a supportive network for Veterans, and the Philadelphia team noted that a close relationship between Veterans and VA case managers may allow VA case managers to identify issues that Veterans are experiencing before they escalate.

Veteran Perspectives

During qualitative interviews, Veterans discussed how the program's facilitation of both housing (for example, reestablishing a renting record) and nonhousing factors (for example, connections with social support services; meeting educational, work-related, or personal goals) affected their experience in the HUD-VASH program (see exhibit 9.2).

Exhibit 9.2 Program Facilitators Identified by Qualitative Respondents

Connecting to community resources
Household assistance
Promoting Veteran independence

Source: Veteran Interview

Connecting to Community Resources

Respondents discussed accessing a variety of programs and social supports that aided in their community connections. Those programs included attending meetings to remain sober; classes on managing anger, therapy, or money; and pursuing opportunities for educational or vocational growth.

They have classes, you know. They have computer classes. There is just a lot of things that they have going on. Some things you may be eligible for and without them you would not know about it. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

Honestly, HUD-VASH here has a lot of very helpful information as far as going back to school, as far as gaining employment within the city. They are really good for that. Like I said, with me it's kind of a different case, because my mother is still my number one priority. So, I had to take different routes, and a lot of the help that I received has been through VUB, Veterans Upward Bound. It's a program for Veterans who want to go back to college. So, being in that program really helped me out a lot as far as employment, and going back to school. And they work together as a matter of fact like HUD-VASH, the VA and the VUB—they work together. It's like a lot of the people who are in HUD-VASH are students at the VUB and vice versa, because at the VUB, I met a lot of homeless Veterans. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

They give out information about different places. Maybe there was another place you could move to, or maybe hotels were giving discounts on furniture and stuff, or if there was a flea market somewhere or other kind of information, or somebody that is providing some food or something. They would give information for that. (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

Household Assistance

Respondents reported a variety of ways they received housing assistance through HUD-VASH. Access to furniture and other household items often was necessary once a Veteran was housed. Respondents also were often connected to other programs to help with move-in deposits, rental costs, utility bills, phone expenses, and food assistance.

I went to [a local organization]. They gave me some kitchen stuff that people had donated. It took me like a month to get my bed, though, after that because I wasn't going to get a bed from that place. I accumulated my stuff within a couple of months. But my basic stuff, like a couple pots and pans and some kitchen utensils, I got that when I moved in. So I got most of that from the [local organization]. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

They gave us—they helped us with the furniture voucher, and these vouchers are based on the size of your family and your requirements. I got everything that I needed to move in at the time, basically—beds, tables, a sofa, and the basic things. I was able to move in comfortably. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

The time when I was having some money difficulties, they helped me with finding a program that would assist me in paying a bill. And on top of that, the VASH did help me with—I had a lot of tickets that I had. So I was going to roll them to some homeless court program through the VASH, which was very helpful. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

Promoting Veteran Independence

Respondents described how the program helped them reestablish their rental and credit histories and assisted with other factors that promoted their independence. One respondent reported becoming self-sufficient and no longer needing the HUD-VASH program for support.

I had an eviction and that hindered me from renting from anyone and I had no income. Basically, once I started receiving income then it was a matter of not having any background rental history, so we had to start, so VASH helped me get started. Now I got 5 years of me paying rent on my own. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

They help you with your credit and stuff, to correct your credit. And once you get that completed, then if you want to, you can apply for a house. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

They give you programs where they send us to different seminars we can approach to buy our own homes, get our credit repaired, and these things. In other words, they're not leaving stuff here when you leave forever. You could if you wanted to stay in the program, but if you want to advance and go out of the program, they're making ways that you could have an opportunity to leave out of it, and it's very good. As a matter of fact we have a meeting that we have to go to. It's a mandatory meeting. We will meet with bank lenders and business people and housing people to see how they can best help us to acquire our own property. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

BARRIERS

Program Staff Perspectives

Housing authority and VA staff noted barriers faced by the HUD-VASH program and its participants: access to resources, program issues, property owners and housing, and Veteran issues. Exhibit 9.3 provides further detail for the most common barriers mentioned across sites.

Veteran Mental Health or Substance Use Conditions

Staff in Houston indicated that Veterans with PTSD, traumatic brain injury, or SUD may have difficulty accessing and maintaining housing. The Los Angeles VA case management team reported an insufficient number of VA SUD specialists; the specialists must primarily focus on crisis management rather than supporting Veterans before they fall into crisis. VA staff also described how Veterans with SUD are more likely to abandon their units and may face losing their housing while in treatment. In addition, HACSC staff reported that Veterans with mental health issues, such as PTSD, often have difficulty communicating and may become easily agitated and, although those Veterans are receiving services through VA, may not be compliant with their treatment or refuse to follow up with providers. Finally, staff in Philadelphia mentioned that Veterans in recovery may relapse when they have a space of their own; some experience a “honeymoon period” when they first move into housing and feel that their lives are in order, but the pressure to maintain it may lead to relapse.

Veteran Readiness

In Houston, staff described how the transition from living on the streets to renting a housing unit is easier for some Veterans than for others, particularly because it requires some Veterans to learn a new way of interacting in the world that they may find challenging and stressful. Additionally, staff in Los Angeles described the difficulty of providing case management to this hard-to-serve population, many of whom do not engage well with VA case managers and the community. Given their Housing First approach, staff in Palo Alto indicated that they are not working on housing readiness and that as the program enrolls more chronically homeless Veterans, Veteran readiness has become an increasing challenge. Philadelphia staff echoed the sentiment that some Veterans who are experiencing homelessness are not ready to accept the assistance being offered because of personal circumstances, particularly mental health challenges or drug dependency.

Move-In Costs

Staff described move-in costs and access to assistance for Veterans in need as a common barrier. In Houston, many property owners will not let Veterans move into housing without a letter from a service provider that is offering financial assistance. Many providers require specific documents, however, such as proof of a passed inspection, which can delay a Veteran’s moving into the unit. Palo Alto staff further indicated that although a Veteran with no income can be approved for HUD-VASH, community partners, including Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), are not required to provide move-in assistance. Because Veterans with zero income cannot prove that they can sustain payments, many organizations do not want to provide move-in assistance.

Exhibit 9.3 Program Barriers Identified by Housing Authority and VA Staff

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Access to resources				
Lack of available move-in assistance (funds, furniture)	X	-	-	-
Move-in costs (application fees, security deposit)	X	X	X	
Program issues				
Differing program requirements across housing authorities	-	X	-	-
Inefficient processes	X	-	-	X
Inspection timeline	-	X	-	-
Insufficient staff	-	-	X	-
Mass briefings	X	-	-	-
Multiple points of contact	-	X	-	-
Program regulations (data entry, changes to payment standards)	-	-	X	-
Reduction in voucher amount	-	-	-	X
Tension between HUD and VA performance measures	-	-	-	X
VA case manager as overzealous in advocacy efforts	-	X	-	-
Property owners and housing				
Lack of affordable housing	-	X	X	-
Location of affordable units	-	X	-	-
Retaining support from property owners	-	-	-	X
Unethical property owners	X	-	-	-
Veteran issues				
Lack of communication between Veteran and VA case manager	-	X	-	-
Veteran background characteristics (past evictions, poor credit, criminal background)	X	-	X	X
Veteran financial issues (zero/low income, money mismanagement)	X	-	-	X
Veteran medical conditions	-	X	-	-
Veteran mental health conditions	X	X	X	X
Veteran misunderstanding of program rules and requirements	-	X	-	-
Veteran motivation	-	-	-	X
Veteran readiness	X	X	X	X
Veteran substance use conditions	X	X	X	X

HUD = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. VA = U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Source: Staff Interview

Veteran Background Characteristics

Common barriers to housing outlined by Houston staff included past evictions, previous broken leases, poor credit, and criminal background. Additionally, staff mentioned that Veterans in recovery may have felony charges, and the only property owners willing to rent to them are in locations that compromise their recovery. Staff in Palo Alto also indicated that Veterans with those types of background characteristics often have difficulty finding a property owner who will rent to them and Veterans who are frequently denied housing because of those issues may become discouraged by the process.

Veteran Perspectives

Study respondents discussed aspects of the HUD-VASH program that they found challenging to their housing stability: negative experiences while enrolling in or participating in HUD-VASH; not having adequate support both in terms of rental assistance and ancillary needs, such as deposits, utilities, moving costs, or food; and difficulties with processing their applications or other procedural issues. Themes that emerged in this category are listed in Exhibit 9.4.

Exhibit 9.4 Program Barriers Identified by Qualitative Respondents

Discrimination	Program rules	Transportation
Need for additional support	Staff interactions	

Source: Veteran Interview

Discrimination

Some respondents felt that they experienced discrimination because of their background. Instances included being charged higher amounts for security deposits, having difficulty securing housing, and feeling judged by potential property owners. Other respondents had difficulty securing housing because of their disabilities, and some respondents described feeling discriminated against simply because they had a HUD-VASH voucher.

People and society, they have a stigma about Veterans, especially the homeless or [ones] with mental health issues. So, the stigma is really when people are trying to get some things. People look at, “oh, they’re a disabled Veteran with health issues,” and people fear and push you away instead of helping. So, all these people that are trying to reintegrate and trying to readjust are having issues because society is pushing back while we are just trying to find out what’s available to us. If you have some gang member, he could get Section 8. Why can’t a disabled Vet? (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

Three places I got to putting in an application. None of them got back to me, so I got back to them. Then finally one landlord told me what time it was, “You ain’t got a job. How would you pay your rent?” And that was basically it, that “We ain’t gonna rent to you because you ain’t got a job.” The other one is the story too, but they wouldn’t say it because it’s discrimination, because I got a voucher. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

It was so-so. I went down to pick up another package to look for housing, places to stay—and a lot of them, they go back 10 years on your background. (Stayer—Houston)

Those apartment listings that they give you—if I had known then that those listings do not help Veterans with background issues, then I probably would have looked at it a little differently. That was one of my reasons. My primary reason was that I did not want to go back to being homeless. Two, I did not want to still be staying with my sister. Three, I knew I had background issues. I know in [the county], not the housing authority but [the county] in general, they frown upon people with x’s on their head. I wish that as a Veteran like myself, I wish I could change that across the board. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

Need for Additional Support

When discussing challenges and barriers, respondents discussed the need for additional support, primarily financial or programmatic. Some Veterans were unaware of any available assistance, such as help with moving furniture or financial assistance with move-in costs, which they reportedly could have used. Some respondents needed help paying their rent as a result of unforeseen rent increases.

I needed everything... When I came down to the program, I moved, because I was staying in the Salvation Army. I was in there. I waited for a VA slot to open up. So I had a suitcase and that was it. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

Just the resources. I mean you have organizations that fake that they have references and they go to ask people for money to help them find [stuff] and all those leads are nothing. You have people that you know post on Craigslist or different things—all those lead to nothing. And it just makes it difficult because, you have to—all these places are like, “Give us this much money. We’ll help you find an apartment.” And you have all these resources in society, but when it comes to a Vet trying to find those resources, those resources are just like taking advantage of Vets, and then the resource that was supposed to help Vets aren’t promoting them enough, so Vets can be like, “Okay. I want this. I want that.” You have to go and ask. Nobody is promoting. You don’t see a sign at the hospital saying, “Oh, are you homeless? Sign-up for—.” You know, you don’t see those. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

Program Rules

Some Veterans expressed difficulty complying with the program’s rules for maintaining housing, such as staying sober, finding suitable housing that met their needs within the time allotted, or not allowing friends or family to live in the apartment with them. Several respondents mentioned difficulties attending VA case management meetings because of other responsibilities or simply finding them onerous.

I was ready to have company. I was ready to have visitors or whatever so that they would not be scrutinized. They get into some points they want to check people’s bags coming in there or whatever. We are not in a prison. You are not going to take over my rights—check anybody’s bags when they dealing with a house. That apartment is a house. They under an apartment—under their place, under their apartment. So it is not any different than any other apartments, so people do stuff they should not do. They violate a lot of our rights. (Leased-up exiter —Houston)

I do not know how much the agency that supplements us gives them, but for the places we live in. I mean, the places you are actually getting to live in, it is poverty already there. It exists. So how are you supposed to get out when you are kept in a society to where, hey, this is it. Good for you. You are not worth moving up or put you in a more expensive place because you are who you are. You are stuck there. You should be glad that you got a place to live. I am grateful for that, but I mean, I believe for the money that they are getting by the federal government, and in the places where we are only allowed to live, because the cost of living and stuff, I would try to move. In my personal opinion, I think we are getting ripped off man. Because I am sure that our government gives a whole lot of money, man, to help us. And here we are, keeping us at poverty level. Because Section 8 has their own

rules and regulations and the state has their own rules and regulations. ... I am sad. I hate to say it, but it is sad. I honestly do feel we, well, not us, because I am grateful. I have a place to live. But the money that these men receive—the federal agencies, even the states receive to help us out—they are getting ripped off, man. I mean, they are. If our government is going to take that time to help us out and get us out of the streets and do everything, why are we so limited? Because of the rules and regulations that Section 8 or the state or the county or the city have? I mean, why? You are getting paid. You are not getting a whole bunch. You are being helped out here. Come on. You know, I am sorry. It does not work like that. (Stayer—Houston)

Staff Interactions

Respondents described difficulty getting in touch with VA case managers, dealing with hostile staff at the housing authority, or simply not getting enough information out of overworked staff.

They kept saying that they were going to come. They did not show up and I called. At one time, they had been on the phone for an hour and 10 minutes. They never answered it. At one point I called back another day; it was almost an hour and someone picked up the phone and hung up. I had to keep starting the process over. It was hell getting through. Finally, I could not believe it, she emailed them and got a message back from them that they would be there, but she failed to call and let me know. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

They were very cold and unsupportive. It was like we were bothering them; I was bothering them. But I got a new case manager at the [housing authority]. I do not know what she is like yet; I have not met her yet. See how challenging that one will be. I did not realize that I had to be so concise with them and everything, how everything is like, “Do not bother us about that. Do not bother. You give us one of those.” You know, I still would like to get a part-time job and I still do not understand where I have to—I know the income limits, but it is like I have to bring them the receipts? And if I am making too much, then what? Do they just throw me off the program? They do not tell me. They do not explain things to me. At least this woman did not, the case manager that I am dealing with right now. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

Transportation

Respondents who spoke about transportation often reported difficulty with it in the context of their housing search and move-in experience. Lack of a vehicle was also a factor that limited some Veterans to selecting housing close to public transportation rather than in their preferred location. Individuals not close to transportation centers expressed discontent with their ability to get around. Other transportation concerns included needing a reliable way to get to work or other meetings, the expenses associated with taking public transportation, and the inability to use public transportation because they were ill.

[Move-in] was difficult because I had to do it all myself. I specifically bought an old pick-up truck for that purpose because I knew I wouldn't have the money to rent one and to hire anyone else to help me, so I bought a dolly and an old pick-up truck and I moved everything in there myself. It was more difficult. It did deplete all of my resources, but I didn't have a choice. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

I would just say [the most difficult part] just inability to really get around like I needed to. Even though I do have a bus pass, it is time consuming; public transportation is time

consuming. So, having to get off this bus, that bus, this bus, it lessens the amount of places that you could get to in a day's time. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

One of the reasons I stay there was just because of the fact of the transportation. That if I would have gotten a job, since I do not drive, it would have been easy for me to get from point A to point B. But in reality, the place we live in, I mean, I do not like it at all really. I am there because, don't get me wrong, like I said, I am grateful, I am very grateful that I got a place to live and everything else. But I do not like that place. (Stayer—Houston)

You end up, as you get the Internet, using that as one way to get a lot of apartment complexes. You have to do some serious phone campaigns, if you really want to find apartments that accept felonies. If you are on public transportation, you cannot really go to all of them. You can only pick out three or four you can do on a Saturday. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Program Staff

Program recommendations provided by housing authority and VA staff generally fell into the following categories: communication and collaboration, process improvements, property owner incentives, resources, and VA staffing (see exhibit 9.5).

Communication and Collaboration

Program staff identified collaboration as a key factor in the success of HUD-VASH.

Recommendations offered by staff included the following:

- Coordinate HUD-VASH Boot Camps and events—Events that bring together staff from HUD, VA, and the community foster a collaborative spirit. PHA staff said that the Boot Camp opened dialogue between service providers and enabled the program to operate more quickly and effectively.
- Identify solutions to resolve tension between HUD and VA performance measures—Housing authorities gauge the success of HUD-VASH by the number of Veterans who lease housing through the program, whereas VA measures performance by the number of Veterans enrolled in the program; however, Veterans who are enrolled in HUD-VASH are not necessarily housed. Enrollment in the program means that Veterans, many of whom have been chronically homeless, are receiving VA case management and typically require a great deal of support and encouragement to reach the point of leasing an apartment. The biggest challenge for HCHA, for example, is receiving enough referrals from VA to keep all of their vouchers in use. HCHA reports that they have requested additional referrals but do not receive them.
- Improve data use and sharing—HHA suggested that HUD and VA ensure that each has access to the same information about Veterans. HHA said that, at times, information in the VA HOMES system, including consent forms, would be useful to HHA staff who are unable to access the system. Having one system would make HUD-VASH operate more effectively and efficiently. HACC also mentioned the importance of data sharing between HUD and VA to ensure that the program is meeting its goals.

- Revise definition/implementation of chronically homeless—HACoLA indicated that the definition of chronically homeless has made serving the large homeless population in Los Angeles difficult. In effect, Veterans may be told that they are not “homeless enough” to meet program eligibility requirements; however, particularly for Veterans with children, meeting the federal definition may not be in the best interest of their family. If Veterans stay in a shelter, they may be separated from their children. Similarly, families cannot stay in parks or cars because the Department of Children and Family Services will remove the children.

Exhibit 9.5 Recommendations Identified by Housing Authority and VA Staff

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Communication and collaboration				
HUD-VASH Boot Camps and events	-	-	-	X
Identify solutions to resolve tension between HUD and VA performance measures	X	-	X	-
Improve data use and sharing	X	-	-	X
Revise definition/implementation of “chronically homeless”	-	X	-	-
Process improvements				
Checklists for processes	-	-	X	-
Deputize VA staff to conduct inspections	-	-	X	-
Flexibility in program requirements	X	X	X	-
Improve coordinated access and use of assessment tools to determine Veterans’ level of need	X	-	-	-
Include VA on notices sent to Veterans by housing authority	-	X	-	-
More frequent Veteran assessments for wraparound services	-	X	-	-
One-on-one VA case management meetings with Veterans at start of program	X	-	-	-
Property owner incentives				
Certify property owners who consistently meet inspection guidelines and debar property owners who engage in unethical practices	X	-	-	-
Housing fairs/events to recruit property owners	-	X	-	-
Resources				
Move-in assistance	-	X	X	X
Transportation	-	-	-	X
Veteran computer access	-	-	-	X
VA staffing				
Continuing education for staff on evidence-based practices	-	X	X	-
VA specialists (benefits, employment, housing)	X	X	-	-

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing.

Source: Staff Interview

Process Improvements

All of the study sites described how they work to improve their processes to better serve Veterans. Process improvements, some implemented and others on the “wish list,” are included below.

- Create checklists for processes—In an effort to streamline procedures, HACSC and VA staff mapped out the HUD-VASH processes and highlighted the barriers for both teams. They discussed ways to make the process more efficient, such as including a documents checklist to assist VA case managers with completing the voucher application.
- Deputize VA staff to conduct inspections—The Palo Alto VA team suggested that in areas where it can take a long time to schedule inspections because of geographic limitations, having VA housing specialists conduct inspections would be helpful. In some areas, that could reduce the lease-up time by 3 to 4 weeks.
- Make program requirements more flexible—HUD-VASH participants would benefit from more flexibility in program requirements. According to HHA, Veterans would ideally be involved in a minimal number of interactions with HHA during enrollment and housing; however, additional interactions often are necessary to fulfill program requirements. For example, Veterans may have difficulty providing income verifications, which can delay the housing process. If HHA can confirm that the Veteran is eligible and will be paying a standard amount, waiving the HUD-VASH income verification requirement would be beneficial. HACLA has been granted a waiver from HUD that has streamlined the recertification process. Rather than providing all of the verifications for bank accounts, Veterans may self-certify accounts less than \$5,000.

Current guidelines require income verification documents to have been issued within 60 days of the voucher release date. Veterans may provide current documents when they initially enroll in HUD-VASH, but by the time a voucher is issued, they are no longer current. HACoLA suggested that the guidelines be adjusted to record the date that the income verification documents are received, independent of the time of voucher issuance.

Other suggestions regarding program flexibility included a cost-of-living allowance for expensive housing markets. VA case managers in Alameda, for example, struggle to house Veterans in that area. Often, Veterans are encouraged to find a unit that is acceptable in the short term, even if only for a 6-month lease, and then continue their housing search once they have moved in. That allows Veterans to get housed and then look for a place that meets their long-term housing criteria.

- Improve coordinated access and use of assessment tools to determine Veterans’ level of need—HHA suggested using the Vulnerability Index to determine the appropriate level of housing for individual Veterans. For example, some Veterans may do better in transitional housing than living independently through the HUD-VASH program. Using the coordinated access intake to inform the services that Veterans receive—possibly including questions regarding the Veterans’ preferred type of living situation (for example, group housing, independent)—would be helpful.
- Include VA case management staff on notices sent to Veterans by the housing authority—In the past, HACLA made an effort to copy a VA case management point of contact on all correspondence sent to Veterans. Now HACLA is in the process of

purchasing a program that will allow their system to automatically generate third-party notices, enabling the housing authority to include individual VA case managers, as well as general VA contacts, on notices. That capability will allow VA case managers to stay abreast of any communications that Veterans in HUD-VASH receive from the housing authority (for example, upcoming recertification, notification of program violations).

- Complete more frequent Veteran assessments for wraparound services—HACoLA believes that offering additional wraparound services for Veterans is important and suggests completing more frequent assessments and reassessments as Veterans' needs change. The housing authority indicated that more frequent check-ins with Veterans and assistance helping them communicate with property owners would be useful for Veterans with housing issues.
- Offer one-on-one VA case management meetings with Veterans as they enter the program—The Houston VA case management team recommends meeting with Veterans individually at the start of the program. The team indicated that mass briefings make assisting Veterans and ensuring their understanding of the program difficult.

Property Owner Incentives

Property owners are a key component of HUD-VASH. Good relationships with property owners often are instrumental in securing Veterans' long-term housing sustainability, whereas property owners who take advantage of Veterans or fail to maintain properties are a barrier to that outcome.

- Certify property owners who consistently meet inspection guidelines, and debar property owners who engage in unethical practices—HHA has found that inspections and reinspections often delay housing and recertification processes. The housing authority would like to certify property owners who consistently meet inspection guidelines. Conversely, HHA is aware that some property owners exploit HUD-VASH Veterans—often because they have few housing options—and would like to be able to debar them.
- Recruit property owners through housing fairs or other events—HACoLA is in the process of organizing a property owner service fair. The housing authority anticipates inviting all property owners currently involved with the housing authority to set up a booth at either the housing authority or VAMC to advertise their housing to voucher holders. Depending on the success of the initial fair, the housing authority would consider hosting this event bimonthly.

Resources

VA case managers assist Veterans in a variety of ways. Program staff recommend access to additional resources, whether through the program directly or through outside community providers.

- Move-in assistance—Additional funding for move-in assistance was one of the most common recommendations made by program staff. In Palo Alto, for example, VA case management teams suggested expanding SSVF to all counties in the service area. Additionally, the VA teams would like the allocations to be larger for SSVF so that those agencies do not run the risk of expending all of the assistance available for Veterans in HUD-VASH. Using SSVF funds for application fees would also be helpful, particularly for Veterans with zero income or no savings. This site also suggested having each voucher allocation come with a set amount of funds to be used for move-in expenses, ideally an amount equal to the area's median rent.

The Philadelphia VA case management team reported that additional resources for furniture and other items Veterans need for move-in would improve that process. The team said that furniture and funding for household items are difficult to find, often leading to Veterans renting furniture, which is cost prohibitive.

- Transportation—VA case managers in Philadelphia must share cars and vans. If each VA case manager had a car, the staff would be able to better serve Veterans.
- Computer access—Computer access for Veterans would enable the Philadelphia program to help Veterans with job searches and e-mail communications. Veterans currently use VA case managers’ computers for those tasks, which is not ideal.

VA Staffing

VA case management teams have been adding specialized staff to better serve Veterans with a variety of needs. Several sites suggested hiring additional specialized VA staff trained to assist Veterans in specific areas, such as benefits, employment, and housing, and keeping all staff updated on evidence-based practices.

- Continuing education for staff on evidence-based practices—Members of the Los Angeles VA case management team participated in the cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) training provided by National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV), which allows staff to provide therapy for Veterans in their homes. The team indicated that additional funding to educate staff on other evidence-based treatments would be useful moving forward. Similarly, the Palo Alto VA case management team described the benefits of motivational interviewing. They said it has been useful for addressing issues ranging from substance use to housing to Veteran ambivalence. VA teams suggested further training to enable VA case managers to become more proficient with this technique.
- VA specialists (benefits, employment, housing)—Many staff considered VA specialists to be program facilitators; several suggested adding specialists to their staff to improve program outcomes. The Houston VA case management team would like to incorporate additional housing specialists, which may be particularly helpful for Veterans with special needs or felony records, as both present challenges to accessing appropriate housing. In addition to assisting with the housing search, VA housing specialists could speak to property owners on Veterans’ behalf. Likewise, the Los Angeles VA team believes that having specialized staff to assist Veterans in obtaining benefits would be helpful and an occupational therapist would be useful for Veterans in West Los Angeles. HACoLA is also interested in adding housing specialists to the team to maximize lease-ups.

Veteran

Interviewers asked respondents to share their recommendations for the program; those recommendations were related to additional assistance, process improvements, and staffing issues (see exhibit 9.6).

Exhibit 9.6 Recommendations Identified by Qualitative Respondents

Additional assistance	Process improvements
Changes to program qualifications and requirements	Staffing
Outreach and communication	

Source: Veteran Interview

Additional Assistance

Many respondents recommended that the program provide more assistance to Veterans for rent, finding and purchasing furniture and food, and move-in costs, such as security and utility deposits.

If the Veteran's money should get cut off or anything should happen to their pay, I would have something set up to help the Veteran until they get this situation back in order again. Because the way they are doing now is just like okay, I am going to help you get in the apartment but then when it comes time to pay—[if] I do not have the money to pay them, I have to get out. (Stayer—Houston)

There was getting all the furniture in and stuff—having chairs and having beds for [my family]. Making an improvement for me, I would say would be maybe offer more assistance for families developing. I have a three bedroom where it is hard to fill up a three bedroom house with what little money I have. You can get stuff second-hand, but you can't get a bed second-hand, so that was a little difficult. We shared beds for a while. That was difficult. (Stayer—Palo Alto)

Like when you are trying to get groceries and food. Food, we really need food. There are places that we can go, but it's too bad that the VA don't have places where Veterans can go. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

HUD-VASH program covers the rent, but there is nothing for them as far as deposits are concerned. A lot of those guys, they are having to go to churches and places asking for help. A lot of them don't get it. They might get lucky and find somebody that allows them to pay \$50 a month payment toward the deposit. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

Changes to Program Qualifications and Requirements

Many respondents recommended changes to the qualifications for entering the program or the rules for maintaining housing under HUD-VASH. Veterans suggested improving approaches to determine financial need and support, such as deducting child support payments from income calculations; providing more time to find an apartment; limiting rules about housing qualifications; enforcing less harsh consequences for failing to meet program requirements; providing better care for Veterans' spouses; and developing easier processes for changing locations.

The guidelines for gross net income; change it from gross income down to net. That'd be the only thing that I'd change because if you're going by your gross, you're not thinking about well, they're taking \$200/week out of his check. He's not going to have any money left. That would be the one thing that I would change. (Stayer—Los Angeles)

If the 90-day limit wasn't there and it wasn't so picky about where you are going to live. (Nonleased exiter—Palo Alto)

It is a shame we have to go all the way to [City], or going to a county we do not even want to live in, just because they do not have it in [County 2]. The VA here, they should have branches for you to deal with in [County 2], not just [County 1]. I have lived in [County 2] for 16 years. Why should I have to go to [County 1]? It is my thing, you know. They should have something for us in [County 2]. When I first came to the VA, I found out I was supposed to come over here and deal with this. I came from [County 2]. That is when I got signed up for it. I had my own house and all that. This is the big hospital nearest to us. If

you can take me to that, then why don't you have somebody assigned to take care of the housing? (Leased-up exiter—Philadelphia)

Outreach and Communication

Several respondents asked for more outreach and information about HUD-VASH and additional services available to Veterans experiencing homelessness. They suggested that the program engage Veterans on the street and increase face-to-face interactions.

I wish it was more publicized within the VA, on message boards or whatever. You know, like, "Hey are you at risk for homelessness? Are you homeless? There is a program for you." I am always telling everybody that. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

They didn't actually tell me—she didn't actually tell me that I would have assistance as far as the deposit and all that. It was my friend that was in the program. She told me and she took me to the place. You know it's hard to get that anyhow. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

If it is possible, find someone—a Veteran—who would not mind volunteering to hang some flyers up. I think that would probably really help Veterans. There are a lot of Veterans standing on corners. If they knew about VASH, they would probably just say, "I don't have to stand on the corner and panhandle. I could probably go over here and maybe they'll help get me a place." They are scared and they do not know where to go. That is the big thing for most Veterans. They are scared. They do not know how to talk to people. If there are programs that can make them talk to other Veterans and see other Veterans who have problems, then they will start listening up. It is kind of like that stress program, a program where they can go and sit among each other. It is not that bad. You can talk to people. You need stuff like that. I would say more advertising and more interaction. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

I am the type that I cannot do it over the phone. I just cannot say what is on my mind. I have to be there in person. And a lot of times, they want you to do it over the phone; they do not want you to come in. But they could set up a day and we could sit down. We could go over stuff and how I feel about certain things. Better communication. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

Process Improvements

Respondents made recommendations about improving the process of applying for and using HUD-VASH vouchers; Veterans wished to see more streamlined paperwork processes, along with a quicker turnaround of their applications and better coordination among the parties involved. Veterans requested additional assistance with the housing search, including transportation to prospective apartments, help locating suitable housing units that accept vouchers, and assistance physically moving into their new apartment.

Sometimes, the housing authority would not be on the same page as the HUD-VASH case manager, and then you have to have the apartment people, sometimes they do not be on the same page, and sometimes the apartment people do not know what the housing authority—what kind of paperwork—they really want, because they change. Like, they will change and then they do not tell nobody. When you go, you got to go get this paper signed, or get

this here, and you do not know, because it is something they done changed, that the apartment people do not know about. (Stayer—Houston)

I think it should be quicker than the whole 30 days or 45 days before you actually can move in because you never know, unless you are staying at a shelter or stay at a friend's, you never know the criteria how that is going. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

I suppose it is coordination. There is a built-in difficulty with coordinating between four agencies, so whatever you want to call it—better communication? Frankly, it is advocacy. Frankly, vetting—VA vetting of landlords so that if you are card-carrying slumlord with investigative articles written about them. [If] you can Google the man's name and his address and read about him for 57 pages, probably people should not be taking vets there. (Leased-up exiter—Los Angeles)

If you're going to help somebody, you help them all of the way. Part of being sufficient is having transportation. [My VA case manager] was telling me that that's a privilege. I don't see it like that. That's why a lot of these dudes get in the situations that they're in because they don't have anybody. They've got to depend on other people for basic stuff. Having a car should be—that should be a privilege that everybody can enjoy. (Stayer—Houston)

It would have been nice to have some people on the side that would help you—we are going to move him in this day—depending on a person's condition. I could have used some help, but I ended up doing it all by myself. But then again—perseverance—that is how bad I wanted it. (Nonleased exiter—Los Angeles)

Staffing

Respondents spoke about the importance of working with staff who know and understand their needs and experiences, suggesting that the program should engage more VA peer mentors. Veterans suggested including more Veterans on VA case management teams, ensuring that staff are empathetic to Veterans with complex background issues, decreasing VA case managers' caseloads, and having VA case managers spend more time with their clients. Respondents also noted the frequent turnover of VA case managers and wanted to see the VA address that issue. They also spoke about the value of posthousing support, suggesting that the involvement of the VA case manager is important even after housing is secured.

It is nothing better than for Veterans to help other Veterans. The thing is this: I think on the housing side for HUD-VASH and VA counselors, they need to listen to Veterans talk like this. They need to hear Veterans. Whether it is public transportation, clothing, food, housing, or just getting some blood pressure medicine—listen to us. In order for you to network with us, you have to listen to some of the stuff that goes on out there. Some of the HUD-VASH counselors and workers are not out there on the pavement like that. They are not really out there. They do not know the frustration that some of the Veterans may go through, looking for places. I am not saying be so sympathetic that you just turn a blind eye to it. What I am saying is be sympathetic to the idea of this guy having some things going on in his life. Help us out. The way to help us out is finding apartment complexes, or working with other Veterans, that know people that help Veterans with background issues. They are willing to help Veterans that have handicaps, blind Veterans, Veterans with

wheelchair accessibility. All that stuff is great. They have a lot of that stuff out there for you. They do not have complexes that help Veterans with background issues. I wish they would help us with that kind of stuff. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

Overall I think that the information should be given properly. People who will be assisting Veterans need to be more kind and give different options if it is possible. Listen to the people to see what they have as concerns. If you could not help, then you could direct them where they might get help. (Nonleased exiter—Philadelphia)

If I would have been able to talk to my new case manager about the decision that I made and find me somewhere to go when I left from there, it would have been extremely helpful. But we did not have a conversation like my first case manager. I think if she would have been paying close attention—I do not know how many people she have on her log—but if she had been paying attention to what was really going on, like she came and said, “Okay, we need to discuss this here.” Because the only thing she came over was about my company that I was having. (Leased-up exiter—Houston)

But the thing is, once you get your apartment, you’re kind of on your own after that. I think HUD-VASH should try to spend more time with their clients; the caseworkers try to spend more time because once a month is not enough. A lot of times, I waited for my meetings with him to tell him something. (Leased-up exiter—Palo Alto)

Stop changing people, stop changing these branches. Get somebody in there that’s going to do something and let them stay there. Every time I turn around—I’m serious, the last 4 years we’ve went through five people. I’m serious. And that’s the thing that bothers me. I want to say that. They’re not there long enough to do anything. (Stayer—Philadelphia)

SUMMARY

Housing authority and VA staff identified as key facilitators the importance of leveraging relationships with community partners and connecting Veterans to wraparound services and community resources. They specifically described HUD-VASH Boot Camps as effective. Program staff acknowledged flexible program requirements (for example, 110 percent Fair Market Rents [FMR] in opportunity areas) and streamlined processes (for example, application checklists) that have emerged from collaborative efforts and led to better program outcomes. Veterans also described the importance of outside resources, both for household assistance (for example, move-in deposits) and social supports (for example, educational opportunities).

Both program staff and Veterans described the relationship between VA case managers and Veterans as an important program facilitator. A relationship of trust allows VA case managers to identify issues Veterans are experiencing, advocate on their behalf, and motivate Veterans to meet their goals. Program staff have found that a team approach using specialized VA staff can provide more individualized attention for Veterans who may need it, and Veterans described how their relationship with VA case managers can promote their independence and ability to find and maintain housing.

Program staff and Veterans commonly identified the need for additional financial support; both groups focused on the need to provide assistance for move-in costs, and Veterans also mentioned needing transportation during the housing search and assistance with furnishing their apartments.

Veterans' mental or behavioral health issues and or substance use issues, as well as other background characteristics (for example, criminal backgrounds), may pose barriers to accessing and maintaining housing. Some Veterans reported facing discrimination during their housing searches because of those issues. Similarly, program staff identified Veterans' lack of readiness as a barrier, and Veterans expressed difficulty complying with program rules (for example, difficulty meeting VA case management requirements).

Finally, respondents recounted difficult staff interactions—with the housing authority and with VA case managers—as a program barrier. Veterans recommended decreasing VA case managers' caseloads and addressing their frequent turnover.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS

This study illustrated how and why Veterans exit the HUD-VASH program, identified obstacles to their obtaining and maintaining housing with a HUD-VASH voucher, described the value of services within the context of PSH, and distinguished facilitators and barriers to successful collaboration between VA and HUD in the administration of the program. This final chapter summarizes the findings presented in this report and identifies opportunities for program improvements as well as potential next steps.

HUD-VASH IS SUCCESSFUL

Among HUD-VASH participants who met the study criteria and moved into voucher-supported housing—both stayers and leased-up exiters—86.6 percent remained in the program for at least 1 year and 60.4 percent for at least 2 years.

HUD-VASH participants—regardless of whether they moved into housing—received their vouchers, on average, within 3 months of program admission; both admission to the program after HUD-VASH’s transition to a Housing First approach and the frequency of VA case management contact significantly contributed to a decrease in the number of days required for a Veteran to receive a voucher for permanent housing. During that time, Veterans received the most frequent VA case management, with a gradual decrease following move-in. In general, study respondents reported that HUD-VASH was a good fit for their needs.

HUD-VASH participants who remained in their housing tended to be older. Although one-fourth (25.3 percent) had at least one medical condition and approximately one-third (33.5 percent) had a mental or behavioral health condition—most frequently a history of alcohol or substance abuse—stayers were less likely to have a service-connected disability than were Veterans who exited the program. Veteran respondents who stayed in HUD-VASH most frequently reported receiving their vouchers while living in a supportive environment, such as transitional housing or a treatment facility (47.3 percent). They also reported slightly higher levels of satisfaction with VA case management, stating that their VA case managers were able to help them and that they agreed on goals.

VETERANS LEAVE HUD-VASH HOUSING FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS

Although 52.6 percent of the HUD-VASH participants who moved into permanent housing later exited the program for a variety of reasons, 74.8 percent of leased-up exiters remained in housing for at least 1 year, and 36.1 percent remained in housing for 2 years or more. Their average length of stay in the program was 658 days. After leaving HUD-VASH, almost 93 percent of leased-up exiters did not access a VA homeless program within 1 year.

Reasons for Exiting HUD-VASH After Obtaining Housing

When a Veteran exits HUD-VASH, VA case managers indicate one of 12 reasons why Veterans ended their involvement in HUD-VASH case management. According to VA case managers, the majority (55 percent) of leased-up exiters left the HUD-VASH program because they had accomplished their goals or obtained access to other services and no longer had a need for the

program (42.5 percent), found other housing (8.1 percent), or were no longer eligible for a HUD-VASH voucher (4.9 percent). Among study respondents, slightly more than one-half of leased-up exiters reported that they decided to leave HUD-VASH as opposed to being asked to leave and most frequently reported that an increase in income (27.0 percent), the worsening in a medical, mental health or substance use condition (20.3 percent), or difficulty with housing (12.2 percent) were the main reason for their exit.

Characteristics of Leased-Up Exiters

Leased-up exiters were the most likely of any study group to have a medical (27.7 percent) or mental or behavioral health condition (40.4 percent). Nearly one-half of all leased-up exiters (48.7 percent) received their HUD-VASH vouchers while living in a supportive environment; those Veterans also used emergent and acute care at higher rates before program entry than did Veterans who stayed in housing, which may have implications for their transition to independent living. Their more frequent use of acute care before program entry, however, was followed by declines after housing placement, suggesting that their needs were being addressed. HUD-VASH participants with a service-connected disability were 37 percent more likely to leave HUD-VASH after obtaining housing, perhaps indicating that they had sufficient income to live independently.

Profiles of Leased-Up Exiters

Five distinct profiles described leased-up exiters and indicated a range of success in the program: more than one-half (53.9 percent) of Veterans who left their HUD-VASH after obtaining housing matched profiles that had largely successful exits. Three profiles identified leased-up exiters who, for the most part, accomplished their goals, identified other housing, or left housing after becoming financially ineligible to participate in the program, implying that their income had increased. Members of those groups seemed to require neither the intensive services nor the subsidy provided by HUD-VASH. The profiles suggest that HUD-VASH serves as a throughput to independent housing for many Veterans who are able to accomplish their goals and move on without the support the program offers. Other Veterans, however, may need additional support; the remaining two profiles of leased-up exiters were likely very low income and had a high level of need related to medical issues, mental or behavioral health, or substance use.

SOME VETERANS NEVER USE THEIR HUD-VASH VOUCHERS

Approximately one in five HUD-VASH participants exited HUD-VASH after receiving a voucher but before leasing a housing unit. Only one of 10 Veterans who were admitted to HUD-VASH but did not use their voucher, however, accessed a VA homeless program within 1 year following their exit from HUD-VASH. Although those Veterans never accessed housing through HUD-VASH, they also did not return to homelessness.

Reasons for Exiting HUD-VASH Before Accessing Housing

According to VA case managers, nonleased exiters most frequently left the program because they were no longer interested in participating (21.9 percent), could not be located (16.6 percent), or found other housing (14.2 percent). Almost three in five nonleased respondents reported that they decided to leave the program, most commonly because the voucher has been revoked by the housing authority (22.6 percent) or other difficulties related to the housing search, including

dissatisfaction with available apartments, inability to find an available apartment with the voucher, or the apartment that was found not passing the housing authority inspection (20.8 percent). Nonleased respondents also exited due to offers from family or friends to move into their housing (15.1 percent).

Characteristics of Nonleased Exiters

Compared with Veterans who accessed permanent housing, nonleased exiters were younger and most likely to have been deployed during Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF), Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and New Dawn (OND). Nearly one-third of nonleased exiters received their vouchers at a time when they were literally homeless (30.0 percent), the same proportion as those who entered HUD-VASH from a supportive environment. They received less frequent VA case management between referral to the housing authority and voucher receipt compared with Veterans who accessed housing and reported finding the housing process more difficult. Nonleased exiters were the most likely to report poor health during their time in the program and used emergency and acute care more frequently both before and after entry than did Veterans who moved into housing. Veterans with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a history of suicide or self-inflicted injury had increased odds of not moving into housing.

Profiles of Nonleased Exiters

Three distinct profiles described nonleased exiters, indicating a range of success in the program. Those profiles suggest that approximately one-fourth of nonleased exiters did not need HUD-VASH—they were younger, had access to income related to service-connected disabilities, and had low rates of medical, mental or behavioral health, or substance use conditions—and they most frequently left the program because they found other housing, or were no longer interested in participating in HUD-VASH. The remaining nonleased exiters had very low incomes or a high level of need related to medical, mental or behavioral health, or substance use; more than 40 percent left the program before obtaining permanent housing because the program could not locate them or they were too ill, incarcerated, deceased, or noncompliant with VA case management.

Those profiles indicate that some Veterans who were admitted to HUD-VASH likely could find housing on their own without the assistance of a VA case manager. In contrast, Veterans with more severe medical, mental or behavioral health, or substance use issues may have required more intensive services than they received.

FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

Both housing authority and VA staff identified the importance of collaborating with community partners and connecting Veterans to wrap-around services and community resources as key facilitators of housing; one particularly useful resource was Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF). Collaborative efforts between HUD and VA have led to system changes, such as flexible program requirements and streamlined processes for Veterans to access vouchers, leading to better housing outcomes. Program staff and Veterans described the relationship between VA case managers and Veterans as important in helping Veterans access and maintain permanent housing; a team approach that uses specialized VA staff can provide more individualized attention for Veterans who need it.

Program staff and Veterans commonly identified the need for additional financial support for Veterans as a barrier to housing. Program staff identified assistance with move-in costs as a significant need, and Veterans also requested transportation assistance during the housing search and assistance with furnishing their apartments. Program staff described Veterans' mental or behavioral health or substance use issues and readiness for independent housing as barriers to accessing and maintaining housing. Often Veterans' background characteristics (for example, criminal history) made finding housing hard for them, and they expressed having difficulty complying with program rules (for example, meeting VA case management requirements). Finally, respondents recounted difficult staff interactions—with the housing authority and with VA case managers—and recommended decreasing VA case managers' caseloads and addressing their frequent turnover.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

This study found that HUD-VASH is successful, demonstrated by high rates of retention in housing and, for Veterans who leave their housing or never access permanent housing, low rates of returns to VA homeless programs. The program serves Veterans with a variety of characteristics and a range of needs: more than one-fourth of the HUD-VASH participants had at least one medical condition, and more than one-third had a mental or behavioral health condition. The implementation of several policies—most notably Housing First and SSVF—have contributed to high-need Veterans accessing permanent housing more quickly, validating the evolution of VA's homelessness programs. Moving forward, HUD-VASH should also focus on regularly assessing Veterans' needs, increasing their income and benefits, and encouraging ongoing collaboration between HUD and VA, as well as community-based providers.

Use SSVF to Facilitate Entries and Exits

SSVF has the capacity to address important barriers affecting Veterans' abilities to access housing, stay in housing, and successfully exit subsidized housing. One of the most frequently identified barriers to housing—by program staff as well as Veterans—was difficulty accessing move-in resources, leading to Veterans' inability to use their vouchers and their exiting the program before being housed. Continuing to use SSVF for move-in expenses and developing deep collaborations with community-based organizations that administer SSVF grants may reduce the rate at which Veterans exit the program before accessing housing.

In addition to using SSVF as a move-in resource, this program can be used to keep Veterans in housing by assisting with utility bills or unpaid rent. Among Veterans who were evicted from their HUD-VASH housing, 60 percent identified difficulty paying rent as a contributing factor. Recognizing that issue in a timely manner and connecting Veterans to appropriate resources can decrease the frequency of evictions.

One way that SSVF does not currently seem to be used is to help Veterans successfully transition out of HUD-VASH once they no longer need case management or more intensive services. SSVF could be used to provide shallow subsidies, along with lower intensity supportive services, for Veterans wishing to transition to housing that is not subsidized with a HUD-VASH voucher. That level of intervention also could be used for Veterans who leave HUD-VASH to live with friends or family or in other housing; rather than using HUD-VASH as a throughput to other permanent housing, a longer-term shallow subsidy could assist Veterans in their transition out of the program into other stable housing. Having such an alternative would allow scarce and

expensive resources such as HUD-VASH to be targeted to Veterans with the greatest need and promote Veterans' independence and choice (Tempel, 2013). Several jurisdictions have had some success with such a program, targeting individuals living in PSH with long-term rental histories and no rental or utility arrears, who have ongoing benefits and income, are medically (including mentally and behaviorally) stable, and have not recently required crisis intervention (Haley, 2013).

Continue Using a Housing First Approach with the Option of Increased Transition Assistance

Veterans who were admitted to HUD-VASH during the years following HUD-VASH's transition to a Housing First approach accessed housing more quickly (and those who did not access housing received their vouchers more quickly) compared with those who entered the program during earlier years. That paradigm shift included increased intensity of VA case management services (as evidenced in this report), important system changes for HUD and VA, and conscious efforts to link governmental agencies together and with community-based organizations—with the common goal of quickly housing Veterans experiencing homelessness and then supporting their long-term housing stability. Several options may increase the effectiveness of that approach, including a focus on team-based case management, increased assistance during the housing search, more intensive assistance during Veterans' transitions to independent housing, and use of project-based vouchers.

Team-Based Case Management

Program staff and Veterans described the relationship between VA case managers and Veterans as an important program facilitator. Program staff identified using a team-based approach—incorporating employment, housing, peer support, and SUD specialists—as best practice and reflective of the strong clinical approach that Housing First promotes. Using VA specialists to assist with Veterans' case management needs on the front end (for example, using VA housing specialists during the housing search) and on the back end (for example, offering practical supports to assist with independent living) can help Veterans find and sustain housing. A team-based approach also can address the break in continuity that Veterans experience when staff leave the program, a challenge that Veterans repeatedly voiced during in-person interviews. In addition, VA staff training related to trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral therapy, and other evidence-based practices may further facilitate successful outcomes for Veterans.

The Housing Search

VA case managers and housing authority staff must balance the housing search with Veterans' other case management needs (Austin et al., 2014). In general, Veterans who were unable to access permanent housing found the HUD-VASH housing process more difficult; although nearly one-half of nonleased exit study respondents visited four or more apartments during their housing search, they ultimately did not move into permanent housing, and the majority reported not receiving assistance with that process. This study identified a number of best practices to facilitate the process: maintaining relationships with property owners, which can facilitate acceptance of Veterans with undesirable background characteristics (for example, criminal history) into housing; identifying and preinspecting housing units so they are ready for rapid move-in; and offering “ride-alongs,” in which VA staff regularly accompany groups of Veterans on housing searches. VA peer support and housing specialists also have been beneficial to that process.

Critical Time Intervention

During the 90 days preceding Veterans' admission to HUD-VASH, larger proportions of Veterans who left the program—either before or after accessing permanent housing—used inpatient or emergency care services compared with those who stayed in the program. Additionally, Veterans who accessed housing were more likely to enter the program from a somewhat supported living situation, such as transitional housing or a substance use treatment facility or detox center, whereas Veterans who did not were more likely to have been living on the streets. A more intensive level of support to transition to independent living using Critical Time Intervention (CTI) may be appropriate for some Veterans who are transitioning out of inpatient or emergency services, out of correctional programs, or from the streets to housing.

CTI is a focused, time-limited case management model that uses formal and informal supports to transition people to an integrated life in the community. CTI was developed in response to the observation that formerly homeless individuals with serious mental illness were reappearing in the homeless system during their transition from more to less supportive housing situations (Caton, Wyatt, and Felix, 1992; Gounis and Susser, 1990). To address that phenomenon, CTI provides highly focused, time-limited support during the transition period; the primary goals are to build the individual's connections to formal and informal sources of community support while helping to develop the individual's independent living skills (Herman et al., 2000). Evidence of CTI's effect includes a significant reduction in days homeless and improvement in psychiatric symptoms among those who received CTI compared with controls (Herman et al., 2011; Herman et al., 2000; Susser et al., 1997).

Project-Based Housing

Although the vast majority of Veterans participating in HUD-VASH use a tenant-based voucher to access scattered-site housing, a project-based modality may be more appropriate—and the preference—for Veterans with particularly high needs. Previous research has found that programs that offer a Housing First approach to PSH using project-based housing can increase housing stability (Pearson, Montgomery, and Locke, 2009) and decrease substance use issues among hard-to-serve and high-need populations (Collinset al., 2012). Staff affiliated with project-based PSH have indicated that this housing configuration provides the “opportunity to serve clients who had previously failed in independent housing arrangements and would be difficult to place directly into mainstream units” and allows for additional support and interventions to sustain housing stability (Kresky-Wolff et al., 2010, p. 219).

Regularly Assess Veterans' Needs

Appropriately targeting Veterans for HUD-VASH who need higher levels of case management is also important. Veterans with less need for case management assistance may be better served by SSVF or other lighter-touch VA programs. The profiles of Veterans who left HUD-VASH before accessing housing because they found other housing or were no longer interested in participating indicate that younger Veterans with few medical issues or mental or behavioral health issues may be able to resolve their homelessness through a less intensive intervention, reserving HUD-VASH for more vulnerable Veterans.

Accurately assessing Veterans' needs, strengths, abilities, and preferences at program admission and then throughout their participation in and exit from the program is also important. This information will identify the types of services that the Veteran may need, the level of assistance a Veteran may require to transition to independent living (for example, CTI), as well as preferences

in terms of housing type (for example, project based versus scattered site) and location. Continued assessment throughout the Veteran’s participation in HUD-VASH is critical to determine which and how much of the two components of HUD-VASH—housing and services—the Veteran needs.

As the profiles of Veterans who exited HUD-VASH indicate, some Veterans seem to have fewer needs and often leave the program as they exceed the income limit or identify other permanent housing, whereas other Veterans have experiences that lead to less successful program exits. Consistent with criminal justice literature that posits the need to assess the risk of recidivism to determine the appropriate level of services to reduce future criminal activity (Andrews and Bonta, 2010), assessing the risk of negative exit at program entry could help VA case managers determine the intensity of support that should be provided to HUD-VASH Veterans. Doing so would enable VA case managers to allocate their time and resources based on the individual’s risk of exiting the program, thereby providing more intensive service to those most at risk.

Assessment before and after program exit is also essential. As identified in this report, many Veterans left HUD-VASH both during the housing process and after accessing permanent housing to live with family or friends or in some other housing situation. Veterans should be supported to access housing that is appropriate for them, which may include reuniting with their families. In addition, more accurate metrics should be developed to identify those Veterans who are ready to “graduate” from HUD-VASH.

Finally, continuing to serve Veterans effectively requires knowing more about the circumstances of their exit from the program. Although VA case managers currently report the reasons why Veterans exit HUD-VASH, information from the program’s perspective may not tell the full story. Consistent with VA’s renewed focus on Veteran-centric care, a useful approach would be to conduct exit surveys among samples of Veterans leaving the program to identify what worked, what did not work, what could work, and whether the Veteran’s exit indicates that the program was successful.

Increase Veterans’ Access to Benefits and Income

A repeated finding throughout this study was that many Veterans successfully exited HUD-VASH when they became ineligible as a result of an increase in income, which indicates that a significant portion of the population’s income security changes over time, perhaps through employment or access to benefits. Additionally, the findings suggest that because stayers were less likely to have a service-connected disability—and likely had a lower income—they may have had fewer options beyond HUD-VASH, whereas leased-up exiters with a service-connected disability may have had a higher income that afforded them more housing options.

Other studies have found that Veterans with a service-connected disability are less likely to experience homelessness or ongoing housing instability compared with those who do not have a service-connected disability and are very low income (Byrne et al., 2015; Montgomery et al., 2015). The findings from the present study are similar: having a service-connected disability was significantly associated with Veterans successfully leaving HUD-VASH.

Two key objectives of Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness are to “increase meaningful and sustainable employment” and “improve access to mainstream programs and services to reduce people’s financial vulnerability” (USICH, 2010, pp. 40–41). Working with Veterans to increase their economic security to support successful entries to and exits from HUD-VASH may take a number of forms, including accessing benefits and securing

vocational training and employment. In addition to benefits from the Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA), Veterans may be eligible for benefits through the Social Security Administration (SSA): Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Veterans who are aging or disabled and have low incomes and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for those who are unable to participate in “substantial gainful activity” as a result of a disabling condition (Elder, 2014).

SSA has launched two initiatives to expedite Veterans’ applications for SSI and SSDI. The 100% Permanent and Total Veterans Initiative places a high priority on applications from Veterans who have been identified by VA as having a 100 percent permanent and total disability (SSA, 2016). The Wounded Warriors initiative also expedites disability claims for Veterans who were disabled during active military service on or before October 1, 2001 (Elder, 2014).

In addition to financial benefits, Veterans may receive employment-related support. Several federal agencies—including VA and the Department of Labor (DOL)—support programs intended to increase employment opportunities for Veterans:

- Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Program (HVSEP)—This program, initiated by VA in FFY 2011, employs formerly homeless or at-risk Veterans to serve as vocational rehabilitation specialists to support Veterans in obtaining and sustaining employment (Heitzman, 2015).
- Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Program—CWT, another program funded by VA but not specifically for Veterans experiencing homelessness, places “work-ready” Veterans in competitive employment positions and works with employers to support Veterans in their employment and to determine employers’ staffing needs (VA, 2015).
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program—A third VA program works with Veterans who have service-connected disabilities and an “employment handicap” to access and sustain employment (Riley et al., 2014).
- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)—DOL provides grants to public and private governmental and nonprofit organizations to assist Veterans experiencing homelessness in “reintegrating into society and the labor force” (USICH, 2014, p. 23).

Accessing these resources is particularly important for Veterans with no income. Program staff indicated that although those Veterans are eligible to participate in HUD-VASH, accessing housing is very difficult for them without funds for application fees, utility deposits, and the necessities required to move into a home.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

This study used a mixed methods approach with multiple perspectives—Veterans and staff from both HUD and VA—and a wide array of data, including primary quantitative and qualitative data and secondary data collected through VA homeless programs and medical records. Using primary data allowed the research team to interpret findings from administrative data in the context of Veterans’ and staff’s experience and opinions. In addition, using multiple study sites increased the generalizability of the findings.

Although the wealth of data is a strength of this study, it also presents several limitations. First, because a considerable amount of data were missing, the research team was unable to assess Veterans’ history and chronicity of homelessness, incarceration, family composition, and other

characteristics that add to the complex understanding of homelessness and housing stability. Second, primary data collected from Veterans and program staff are subject to recall and social desirability biases. Third, although multiple perspectives are useful in understanding the HUD-VASH programs and the nature of Veterans' exit from the program, no "gold standard" determines which perspective is accurate; rather, considering multiple perspectives contributes to a more complex understanding of the issues.

In addition, including multiple sites for primary data collection has some limitations. Although NCHAV staff conducted a number of quality assurance activities, the study methodology may have been carried out inconsistently across sites. In addition, the sites were quite heterogeneous in terms of geography, housing markets, and systems. Even though adhering to federal HUD-VASH requirements, each site administered HUD-VASH differently at all levels, from Veteran engagement to interactions between large, community-level governmental agencies. Further, each site was at a different stage in its evolution to a Housing First approach.

Finally, an important limitation of the study is that a Veteran was considered to have exited HUD-VASH when the Veteran exited HUD-VASH case management and was no longer receiving supportive services from the program. The definition is based on the exit status indicated by VA case managers in VA administrative data systems, which does not include an indication of whether the Veteran continued to use their HUD-VASH voucher to subsidize housing expenses. Therefore, this study did not explore the relationship between an exit from HUD-VASH case management and an exit from voucher-subsidized housing.

NEXT STEPS

The present study identified two areas for significant future research: developing assessments and testing interventions. Future work should focus on developing more accurate metrics to be used at assessment or program admission, throughout the housing process, and regularly while Veterans are in housing as well as during program exit. These instruments could help to ensure that Veterans are appropriately targeted for the program and that they receive the level of assistance they need to access and maintain permanent housing. Assessments should be informed by not only existing administrative data but also best practices used in the mainstream community and pilot testing and rigorous evaluation of new measures. In addition to assessing Veterans' needs throughout their tenure in the program, the program also must assess Veterans' satisfaction with HUD-VASH and the circumstances surrounding their exit. Surveying Veterans directly would provide a deeper understanding regarding what constitutes success in HUD-VASH and Veterans' perceptions of what is needed to attain it.

In terms of supporting Veterans once they are in the program, interventions with two levels of intensity should be considered. Veterans who may not need the full complement of services afforded in the HUD-VASH program may benefit from a lower intensity intervention, including shallow subsidies for Veterans transitioning out of the program. Veterans transitioning from a literally homeless or institutional environment may require more intensive services, such as CTI, for a longer period of time. Both levels of service provision should be formulated and evaluated within the context of VA and HUD-VASH. In addition, the role of project-based vouchers in addressing the needs of particularly vulnerable populations should be considered. Each of these recommendations is intended to support Veterans' successful housing outcome.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team—Team treatment approach designed to provide comprehensive, community-based psychiatric treatment, rehabilitation, and support to persons with serious and persistent mental illness

Chronic homelessness—An individual or family with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years

DD-214—Form issued to Veterans by the Defense Department, identifying condition of discharge: honorable, general, other than honorable, dishonorable or bad conduct

Fair Market Rent (FMR)—Gross rent estimate used to determine payment standard amounts for HCV program, which includes the cost of rent plus the cost of all tenant-paid utilities, except telephones, cable or satellite television service, and internet service; based on either the 40th or 50th percentile of rents charged for standard rental housing in the FMR area

Hardship extension—According to HUD-VASH program rules, the initial search term for locating housing using a HUD-VASH voucher must be at least 60 calendar days; in recognition of the potential challenges associated with locating appropriate housing, this search can be extended to 120 days or longer if a Veteran requests a hardship extension

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract—The HAP contract is executed between the housing authority and the property owner renting to a HUD-VASH client; contract must be in the form required by HUD and include the same term as the lease executed between the property owner and the HUD-VASH client

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program—The HCV Program is the federal government's main housing assistance program, administered locally by public housing agencies; it allows participants to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects; rental units must meet minimum standards of health and safety, as determined by the housing authority

Housing First—Housing model based on a philosophy of focusing on getting participants into housing without first requiring treatment

Housing Quality Standards (HQS)—Basic standards, outlined by HUD, that units rented through HCV must meet before assistance can be paid on behalf of a family; HQSs establish the minimum criteria for the health and safety of program participants

HUD-VASH Boot Camps—Multi-day events with HUD, VA, and community providers focused on improving housing placement rates for homeless Veterans in the community

Lease—The lease agreement is executed between the property owner and the Veteran participating in HUD-VASH; outlines terms of the property rental

Moving to Work (MTW)—A demonstration program for housing authorities that provides them the opportunity to design and test innovative, locally-designed, and cost-effective strategies;

MTW grants PHAs more flexibility in how federal funds are spent and offers exemptions from existing rules

Pathways to Housing—A housing program based on the Housing First model to address homelessness among people with psychiatric disabilities

Payment standard—Payment standards are used to calculate the rent paid by the housing authority for a HUD-VASH client; the range of possible payment standard amounts is based on HUD’s published FMR schedule

Port—Transfer process that enables HCV holders to relocate and select housing in other locations in the United States

Public Housing Authority (HA)—A government agency, generally affiliated with a local government, whose responsibility is the ownership and operation of subsidized housing and rental assistance programs

Recertification—The process by which the housing authority re-verifies income and completes a housing unit inspection, typically on an annual basis, for HCV holders

Reexaminations—The process by which a Veteran informs the housing authority of a change to income or household composition

Rent comparables—In conducting rent reasonableness, the housing authority must determine whether the rent the property owner has requested is reasonable in comparison to rent for other comparable unassisted units; in determining comparability, the housing authority must consider: (1) location, quality, size, unit type, and age of the contract unit, and (2) amenities, housing services, maintenance, and utilities the owner must provide under the lease

Rent reasonableness—Housing authorities must ensure that rents charged by owners to HCV program participants are reasonable; this determination involves two comparisons: (1) a comparison of the rent for the voucher unit to rents for similar unassisted units in the marketplace, and (2) a comparison to the rents for similar units on the premises

Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA)—Required HUD form completed by HCV clients with details on a desired rental unit and property owner; completed by HUD-VASH clients and/or property owner and submitted to housing authority as the first step in formalizing the lease and HAP contract

Service-connected disability—VA’s enrollment priority groups indicate the extent to which a Veteran is receiving compensation as a result of a disability incurred during military service, as well as whether a Veteran is very low income. Higher service-connected disability ratings likely reflect a greater level of disability, as well as higher income received by the Veteran from the VA.

Voucher briefing—Housing authorities require that HUD-VASH clients participate in this informational session prior to providing the Veteran a HUD-VASH voucher

Vulnerability Index—A tool for identifying and prioritizing the street homeless populations for housing according to the fragility of their health; may take into account issues such as age; chronic medical conditions; co-occurring psychiatric, substance abuse, and chronic medical conditions; and/or number of hospitalizations or emergency room visits during the past year

APPENDIX B: TERMS

ACT—Assertive Community Treatment
CBOC—Community-Based Outpatient Clinic
CoC—Continuum of Care
CPRS—VA Computerized Patient Record System
CTI—Critical Time Intervention
CWT—Compensated Work Therapy
FFY—Federal Fiscal Year
FMR—Fair Market Rent
DCHV—Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans
DOL—Department of Labor
GPD—Grant and Per Diem
HA—Housing Authority
HACA—Housing Authority of the County of Alameda
HACC—Housing Authority of the City of Camden
HACLA—Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
HACM—Housing Authority of Monterey County
HACoLA—Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles
HACSC—Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara
HACSCUZ—Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz
HACSJ—Housing Authority of the County of San Joaquin
HACSM—Housing Authority of the County of San Mateo
HACSTAN—Housing Authority of the County of Stanislaus
HAP—Housing Assistance Payment
HCHA—Harris County Housing Authority
HCHV—Healthcare for Homeless Veterans
HCV—Housing Choice Voucher
HEARTH Act—Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act
HHA—Houston Housing Authority
HMIS—Homeless Management Information System
HOMES—VA Homeless Management and Evaluation System

HPACT—Homeless Patient Aligned Care Team
HUD—U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
HUD-VASH—Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing
HVRP—Homeless Veterans Rehabilitation Program
HVSEP—Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Program
IRB—Institutional Review Board
LCA—Latent Class Analysis
MMRL—Mixed Methods Research Lab at the University of Pennsylvania
MTW—Moving to Work
NCHAV—VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans
OEF—Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF—Operation Iraqi Freedom
OND—Operation New Dawn
PHA—Either Public Housing Authority or Philadelphia Housing Authority
PIT—Point-in-Time
PSH—Permanent Supportive Housing
PTSD—Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RFTA—Request for Tenancy Approval
ROI—Release of Information
SPA—Service Planning Area
SSI/SSDI—Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance
SSVF—Supportive Services for Veteran Families
SUD—Substance Use Disorder
TBI—Traumatic Brain Injury
USICH—U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
VA—U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VAMC—Veterans Affairs Medical Center
VHA—Veterans Health Administration
VISN—Veterans Integrated Service Networks
VJO—Veterans Justice Outreach
VR&E—Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program

APPENDIX C: METHODS

VETERAN INTERVIEW MATERIALS

Veteran Questionnaire -- Cover Page

1. Are you currently enrolled in the HUD-VASH program?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) No

*If "Yes" check "Stayer" below and continue to "Stayer" interview questionnaire.
If "No" continue to question 2.*

2. On approximately what date did you exit the HUD-VASH program?

Date: _____

3. Before you left the program, did you sign a lease on an apartment?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) No

*If "Yes," check "Leased-Up Exiter" below, use Leased-Up Exiter questionnaire.
If "No" check "Non-Leased Exiter" below, use Non-Leased Exiter questionnaire.*

Veteran Questionnaire -- Stayer

Housing and Homelessness History

1. I want you to think about where you have been living since you enrolled in the HUD-VASH program. We would like to know all of the places where you've stayed during this time, including hospitals. Let's look at this calendar together, and I'll make notes as you talk. Why don't we start with where you are living now and work backwards from there, place by place. *[Refer to CARD 1]*

Location Letter	Date Moved In	Date Moved Out	Location Type (code)	Composition (code)
A.				
B.				
C.				
D.				
E.				
F.				
G.				
H.				

2. Using the chart, please point out where you were staying when you obtained a HUD-VASH Voucher.
Choose Location Letter from list above: _____

3. Using the chart, please point out where you were staying when you found an apartment with your HUD-VASH voucher
Choose Location Letter from list above: _____

- HUD-VASH Housing Process

4. How would you describe the different steps involved in getting a voucher?
[Refer to CARD 2 to code each step from Very Difficult to Very Easy]

	Step	Code (from CARD 2)
A.	Enrolling in the HUD-VASH program	
B.	Submitting application to PHA	
C.	Providing documentation of identity and income to Public Housing Authority	

5. Did you receive help from your HUD-VASH case manager or other HUD-VASH staff in either of the following steps in obtaining a voucher? [Check yes or no for each step]

	Step	Yes (Received Help)	No (Did not receive help)
A.	Getting and attending appointment with the PHA		
B.	Providing proof of identity or income		
C.	Completing and submitting the PHA application		

6. Now I want to ask you about your impressions of the condition and location of the apartments that you visited during your housing search. Approximately how many apartments did you visit during your housing search?

_____ apartments

7. Of those apartments, how many did you think were:

Acceptable _____

Unacceptable _____

8. How would you describe the different steps involved in obtaining a lease?

[Refer to CARD 2 to code each step from Very Difficult to Very Easy]

	Step	Code (from CARD 2)
A.	Finding listings of available apartments	
B.	Finding an acceptable apartment option	
C.	Getting an apartment inspected by PHA	
D.	Being selected as a tenant by a landlord	
E.	Obtaining money for rent, security deposit or moving costs	

9. How did you find the apartment options you chose from?

- On my own
- With help of friends or family
- With help of HUD-VASH program staff such as case manager or housing specialist
- With help of staff from the PHA
- VASH program staff conducted the apartment search for me

10. What was your primary reason for choosing your apartment?

- Location/neighborhood
- Good repair/quality
- Particular features of apartment (e.g. appliances, space, appearance, pets OK)
- I didn't have a choice

11. Did you have any of the following for your move into the apartment? Check yes or no for each item

	Item	Yes	No
A.	Basic items essential to move in (e.g. bed, table, sheets)		
B.	Assistance from HUD-VASH program staff in getting essential move-in items		
C.	Help from HUD-VASH program staff moving belongings into the apartment		
D.	Help from HUD-VASH program with setting up your utilities (e.g. phone, electricity, gas, cable)		

Housing Satisfaction: HUD-VASH apartment

12. How comfortable did you feel staying in the apartment on your first few days there?

- Not comfortable
- Moderately comfortable
- Very comfortable

13. How satisfied are you with the following qualities of your apartment? *Refer to CARD 3 to code satisfaction with each quality*

	Quality	Code
A.	Apartment condition	
B.	Affordability	
C.	Building safety and security	
D.	Access to shopping	
E.	Access to public transportation	
E.	Neighborhood safety	
F.	Opportunities to socialize	

14. Do you think the HUD-VASH program is a good fit for your needs?
- Yes
 - No
15. If you answered "No" to the previous question, what is your primary reason?
- I don't need as much support as the program offered
 - I need greater support than the program offers
 - Program has more rules than is acceptable to me
 - Housing unit does not fit my needs
 - Other _____

Income, work and school: While enrolled in HUD-VASH

16. What are your current sources of income? *Circle all that apply*
- VA Compensation
 - VA Pension
 - Social Security Retirement
 - SSI
 - SSD/I
 - Full-time work
 - Part-time work
 - Other _____

-
17. Are you involved in any educational or vocational program?
- Yes
 - No

HUD-VASH Case Manager Relationship

18. On average, how many times a month do you meet with your case manager?
 _____ times per month

19. How often do the following statements apply to you? *Refer to CARD 4 to code level of agreement with each statement.*

	Statement	Code
A.	My case manager is able to help me.	
B.	My case manager and I agree on goals.	
C.	My case manager and I have different ideas about what my problems are.	
D.	My case manager and I trust one another.	

Medical Condition

20. Have you had any serious medical problems while in the HUD-VASH program?
- Yes
 - No
21. Have you ever hospitalized for any medical problem while in the HUD-VASH program?
- Yes
 - No

22. In general, during your time in the HUD-VASH program, how would you describe your health?
- Excellent
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor

23. During your time in HUD-VASH, has your health ever limited you from doing any of the following? *Refer to CARD 4 to code how often the Veteran has been limited from each task*

	Activity	Code
A.	Bathing or dressing yourself	
B.	Climbing one flight of stairs	
C.	Lifting or carrying groceries	
D.	Cooking for yourself	

Mental Health Condition

24. While in the HUD-VASH program, have you had any serious mental health problems?

- Yes
- No

25. Have you been hospitalized for any mental health problem while in HUD-VASH?

- Yes
- No

26. During your time in HUD-VASH, how often have you had the following feelings? *Refer to CARD 4 to code how often the Veteran has experienced each feeling*

	Feeling	Code
A.	Your mood was good	
B.	Under strain, stress, or pressure	
C.	Bothered by nervousness	
D.	Sad, discouraged, or hopeless	
E.	Like you were losing control over the way you acted, talked, or thought	

Substance Abuse Status

27. While in the HUD-VASH program, how troubled or bothered have you been by drugs or alcohol?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Considerably
- Extremely

28. Have you received any inpatient or outpatient treatment for drug or alcohol use while in the HUD-VASH program?

- Inpatient treatment
- Outpatient treatment
- Both inpatient and outpatient treatment
- No treatment

Veteran Questionnaire -- Stayer, Open-Ended

Introduction

I'd like to start the interview by having you walk me through your experiences in the HUD-VASH program. I'm going to start by asking about how you first learned about the program, and then ask you more specifically about the different steps and components of the program. After that, I will ask you some survey questions about these experiences.

Open-Ended Questions

First, I'd like to ask you some questions about how you learned about HUD-VASH and your initial experiences with the program.

Probes: How did you learn about HUD-VASH? How long did it take for you to enroll in HUD-VASH? Did it take longer than you expected, about what you expected, or less time than you expected? Why?

After you enrolled in HUD-VASH, tell me how you learned about how the program works. Describe your first meeting with your case manager. Did you have an orientation? If so, who was the orientation with (HUD-VASH and/or PHA, jointly/separately)? Was it helpful? Were there things you would have liked to know about the program that you didn't learn about until later in the process? What would you have wanted to know and why?

From the time that you first enrolled in HUD-VASH, describe the process for completing the PHA application and receiving your housing voucher. Is there anything that you feel could have been improved about this process?

Next, tell me about your housing search.

Probes: Was it difficult to find a suitable housing option? Why?

Tell me more about being selected as a tenant by the landlord of the property. Did you have to go through any specific screening processes to be selected as a tenant, such as a criminal background check, credit check or drug test? Were you told about any requirements that you would need to meet in order to stay in permanent housing? If so, what were they (e.g., abstinence, sobriety, treatment)? Were you worried that these requirements would make staying in the program hard for you? If so, which one(s)?

Once you decided on an apartment, describe the process for getting the apartment inspected, and preparing for move-in. Is there anything that you feel could have been improved about this process? Did you receive any additional assistance for move-in, such as assistance with move-in costs or furniture? If so, where did you receive assistance from? How did you learn about available assistance? If not, would you have liked to receive assistance? What kind of assistance would have been helpful?

Where did you stay prior to moving into your HUD-VASH housing unit?

Describe your relationship with your case manager.

Probes: What aspects of your relationship with your case manager were helpful? What aspects were unhelpful? What are some things you would change about your relationship with your case manager and/or the HUD-VASH team?

Did you develop a Housing Recovery Plan with your case manager? If so, when did you make it? How did you decide what to include in your plan? Did you ever change your plan? Why?
Was the HUD-VASH team able to help you reach your goals / be successful in maintaining your housing? If not, what else do you wish the HUD-VASH team could have done to help you?

What kind of services did you receive through HUD-VASH (e.g., peer support, supported employment)? Did you participate in any HUD-VASH groups? If so, what groups did you participate in?

Tell me about any parts of the HUD-VASH program that you found challenging.

Probes: Did you have any housing issues or problems after moving into your apartment? If so, were the HUD-VASH team and/or PHA able to assist you to ensure you were able to maintain your housing? If not, why weren't they able to help you?

Did you find it difficult to follow any of the rules from the HUD-VASH team, PHA or landlord? If so, which one(s)?

Now I'd like to talk for a few minutes about your general feelings about the HUD-VASH program.

Probes: What have been the most helpful aspects of the program? What have been the least helpful? Why? If there was one thing that you could change about the HUD-VASH program, what would it be?

Closed-Ended Questions

Thanks for telling me about your experiences with HUD-VASH. Now, I'm going to ask you some additional survey questions about these experiences. (See Appendix A.2a.)

• Conclusion

Alright, so I asked very generally about your experiences in HUD-VASH, and then I asked you some survey questions related to your experience. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience with the program that I haven't asked?

Veteran Questionnaire -- Leased-Up Exiter

Housing and Homelessness History

1. I want you to think about where you have been living since you enrolled in the HUD-VASH program. We would like to know all of the places where you've stayed during this time, including hospitals. Let's look at this calendar together, and I'll make notes as you talk. Why don't we start with where you are living now and work backwards from there, place by place. *[Refer to CARD 1]*

Location Letter	Date Moved In	Date Moved Out	Location Type (code)	Composition (code)
A.				
B.				
C.				
D.				
E.				
F.				
G.				
H.				

2. Using the chart, please point out where you were staying when you obtained a HUD-VASH Voucher.
Choose Location Letter from list above: _____
3. Using the chart, please point out where you were staying when you found an apartment with your HUD-VASH voucher
Choose Location Letter from list above: _____

HUD-VASH Housing Process

4. How would you describe the different steps involved in getting a voucher?
[Refer to CARD 2 to code each step from Very Difficult to Very Easy]

	Step	Code (from CARD 2)
A.	Enrolling in the HUD-VASH program	
B.	Submitting application to PHA	
C.	Providing documentation of identity and income to Public Housing Authority	

5. Did you receive help from your HUD-VASH case manager or other HUD-VASH staff in either of the following steps in obtaining a voucher? *[Check yes or no for each step]*

	Step	Yes (Received Help)	No (Did not receive help)
A.	Getting and attending appointment with the PHA		
B.	Providing proof of identity or income		
C.	Completing and submitting the PHA application		

6. Now I want to ask you about your impressions of the condition and location of the apartments that you visited during your housing search. Approximately how many apartments did you visit during your housing search?

_____ apartments

7. Of those apartments, how many did you think were:

Acceptable _____

Unacceptable _____

8. How would you describe the different steps involved in obtaining a lease?

[Refer to CARD 2 to code each step from Very Difficult to Very Easy]

	Step	Code (from CARD 2)
A	Finding listings of available apartments	
B	Finding an acceptable apartment option	
C	Getting an apartment inspected by PHA	
D	Being selected as a tenant by a landlord	
E	Obtaining money for rent, security deposit or moving costs	

9. How did you find the apartment options you chose from?

- a. On my own
- b. With help of friends or family
- c. With help of HUD-VASH program staff such as case manager or housing specialist
- d. With help of staff from the PHA
- e. VASH program staff conducted the apartment search for me

10. What was your primary reason for choosing your apartment?

- a. Location/neighborhood
- b. Good repair/quality
- c. Particular features of apartment (*e.g. appliances, space, appearance, pets OK*)
- d. I didn't have a choice

11. Did you have any of the following for your move into the apartment? *Check yes or no for each item*

	Item	Yes	No
A.	Basic items essential to move in (e.g. bed, table, sheets)		
B.	Assistance from HUD-VASH program staff in getting essential move-in items		
C.	Help from HUD-VASH program staff moving belongings into the apartment		
D.	Help from HUD-VASH program with setting up your utilities (e.g. phone, electricity, gas, cable)		

Housing Satisfaction: HUD-VASH apartment

12. How comfortable did you feel staying in the apartment on your first few days there?

- a. Not comfortable
- b. Moderately comfortable
- c. Very comfortable

13. How satisfied were you with the following qualities of your apartment? *Refer to CARD 3 to code satisfaction with each quality*

	Quality	Code
A.	Apartment condition	
B.	Affordability	
C.	Building safety and security	
D.	Access to shopping	
E.	Access to public transportation	
E.	Neighborhood safety	
F.	Opportunities to socialize	

14. Do you think the HUD-VASH program was a good fit for your needs?

- a. Yes
- b. No

15. If you answered "No" to the previous question, what is your primary reason?

- a. I didn't need as much support as the program offered
- b. I needed greater support than the program offered
- c. Program had more rules than was acceptable to me
- d. Housing unit did not fit my needs
- e. Other _____

Income, work and school: While enrolled in HUD-VASH

16. What were your sources of income while you were in the HUD-VASH program? *Circle all that apply*
- VA Compensation
 - VA Pension
 - Social Security Retirement
 - SSI
 - SSD/I
 - Full-time work
 - Part-time work
 - Other _____
17. Were you involved in any educational or vocational program while enrolled in HUD-VASH?
- Yes
 - No

HUD-VASH Case Manager Relationship

18. On average, how many times a month did you meet with your case manager when you were enrolled in the program?
 _____ times per month
19. While you were in the HUD-VASH program, how often did the following statements apply to you?
Refer to CARD 4 to code level of agreement with each statement.

	Statement	Code
A.	My case manager was able to help me.	
B.	My case manager and I agreed on goals.	
C.	My case manager and I had different ideas about what my problems were.	
D.	My case manager and I trusted one another.	

Medical Condition

20. While in the HUD-VASH program, did you have any serious medical problems?
- Yes
 - No
21. Were you ever hospitalized for any medical problem while in HUD-VASH?
- Yes
 - No
22. In general, during your time in the HUD-VASH program, how would you describe your health?
- Excellent
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
23. During your time in HUD-VASH, did your health ever limit you from doing any of the following? *Refer to CARD 4 to code how often the Veteran was limited from each task*

	Activity	Code
A.	Bathing or dressing yourself	
B.	Climbing one flight of stairs	
C.	Lifting or carrying groceries	
D.	Cooking for yourself	

Mental Health Condition

24. While in the HUD-VASH program, did you have any serious mental health problems?
- Yes
 - No
25. Were you hospitalized for any mental health problem while in HUD-VASH?
- Yes
 - No

26. During your time in HUD-VASH, how often did you have the following feelings? Refer to CARD 4 to code how often the Veteran experienced each feeling

	Feeling	Code
A.	Your mood was good	
B.	Under strain, stress, or pressure	
C.	Bothered by nervousness	
D.	Sad, discouraged, or hopeless	
E.	Like you were losing control over the way you acted, talked, or thought	

Substance Abuse Status

27. While in the HUD-VASH program, how troubled or bothered were you by drugs or alcohol

- a. Not at all
- b. Slightly
- c. Moderately
- d. Considerably
- e. Extremely

28. Did you receive any inpatient or outpatient treatment for drug or alcohol use while in the HUD-VASH program?

- a. Inpatient treatment
- b. Outpatient treatment
- c. Both inpatient and outpatient treatment
- d. No treatment

Program Exit

29. Did you decide to leave the HUD-VASH program, or were you asked to leave?

- I decided to leave
- I was asked to leave

If you answered "I decided to leave" continue to Question 30. If you answered "I was asked to leave" skip to Question 31.

30. When you decided to leave, did you have plans for a place to live after you left?

- a. Yes
- b. No

31. In your own words, what was the main reason you left the HUD-VASH program? _____

32. Which of the following situations contributed to you leaving the HUD-VASH program? Check all that apply

- a. Difficulty paying the rent
- b. Increase in income
- c. Dissatisfaction with apartment
- d. Dissatisfaction with neighborhood
- e. Conflict with neighbors
- f. Conflict with landlord
- g. Conflict with HUD-VASH case manager or other program staff
- h. Disagreement with program rules
- i. Worsening in medical condition
- j. Worsening in mental health condition
- k. Worsening in substance abuse condition
- l. Improvement in health condition
- m. Improvement in mental health condition
- n. Improvement in substance abuse condition
- o. Legal trouble such as arrest, jail, warrant, probation, lawsuit or trial
- p. Offer from family or friend to move in to their housing
- q. Evicted from apartment
- r. Voucher revoked by PHA

33. Of the reasons listed, which one best matches the main reason that you left the HUD-VASH program? [Write the letter corresponding to the reason from list above] _____

34. Did HUD-VASH staff help you find a new place to stay when you left the program?
- Yes
 - No

Housing Satisfaction: Current Housing

35. How satisfied are you with the following qualities of your current housing?

	Quality	Code
A.	Apartment condition	
B.	Affordability	
C.	Building safety and security	
D.	Access to shopping	
E.	Access to public transportation	
F.	Neighborhood safety	
G.	Opportunities to socialize	

Post-Exit Contact with VA

36. Have you used or do you plan to use VA medical services after leaving the HUD-VASH program?
- Yes
 - No
37. After leaving the HUD-VASH program, are you still in contact with your HUD-VASH case manager?
- Yes
 - No

Income, Work and School: Post-Exit

38. What are your current sources of income?
- VA Compensation
 - VA Pension
 - Social Security Retirement
 - SSI
 - SSD/I
 - Full-time work
 - Part-time work
 - Other _____
39. Are you currently involved in any educational or vocational program?
- Yes
 - No

Veteran Questionnaire -- Leased-Up Exiter, Open-Ended

Introduction

I'd like to start the interview by having you walk me through your experiences in the HUD-VASH program. I'm going to start by asking about how you first learned about the program, and then ask you more specifically about the different steps and components of the program. After that, I will ask you some survey questions about these experiences.

Open-Ended Questions

First, I'd like to ask you some questions about how you learned about HUD-VASH and your initial experiences with the program.

Probes: How did you learn about HUD-VASH? How long did it take for you to enroll in HUD-VASH? Did it take longer than you expected, about what you expected, or less time than you expected? Why?

After you enrolled in HUD-VASH, tell me how you learned about how the program works. Describe your first meeting with your case manager. Did you have an orientation? If so, who was the orientation with (HUD-VASH and/or PHA, jointly/separately)? Was it helpful? Were there things you would have liked to know about the program that you didn't learn about until later in the process? What would you have wanted to know and why?

From the time that you first enrolled in HUD-VASH, describe the process for completing the PHA application and receiving your housing voucher. Is there anything that you feel could have been improved about this process?

Next, tell me about your housing search.

Probes: Was it difficult to find a suitable housing option? Why?

Tell me more about being selected as a tenant by the landlord of the property. Did you have to go through any specific screening processes to be selected as a tenant, such as a criminal background check, credit check or drug test? Were you told about any requirements that you would need to meet in order to stay in permanent housing? If so, what were they (e.g., abstinence, sobriety, treatment)? Were you worried that these requirements would make staying in the program hard for you? If so, which one(s)?

Once you decided on an apartment, describe the process for getting the apartment inspected, and preparing for move-in. Is there anything that you feel could have been improved about this process? Did you receive any additional assistance for move-in, such as assistance with move-in costs or furniture? If so, where did you receive assistance from? How did you learn about available assistance? If not, would you have liked to receive assistance? What kind of assistance would have been helpful?

Where did you stay prior to moving into your HUD-VASH housing unit?

Describe your relationship with your case manager.

Probes: What aspects of your relationship with your case manager were helpful? What aspects were unhelpful? What are some things you would change about your relationship with your case manager and/or the HUD-VASH team?

Did you develop a Housing Recovery Plan with your case manager? If so, when did you make it? How did you decide what to include in your plan? Did you ever change your plan? Why?

Was the HUD-VASH team able to help you reach your goals / be successful in maintaining your housing? If not, what else do you wish the HUD-VASH team could have done to help you?

What kind of services did you receive through HUD-VASH (e.g., peer support, supported employment)? Did you participate in any HUD-VASH groups? If so, what groups did you participate in?

Tell me about any parts of the HUD-VASH program that you found challenging.

Probes: Did you have any housing issues or problems after moving into your apartment? If so, were the HUD-VASH team and/or PHA able to assist you to ensure you were able to maintain your housing? If not, why weren't they able to help you?

Did you find it difficult to follow any of the rules from the HUD-VASH team, PHA or landlord? If so, which one(s)?

Now I'd like to talk for a few minutes about the time when you left the HUD-VASH program.

Probes: When did you first think of leaving the program? Tell me how you came to that decision. What were your feelings about leaving the program? Were you happy to be leaving? Did you want to stay in the program? Why or why not? How were things going for you at the time you left the program? Did any of those things affect your housing situation?

What could have changed that would have made you decide to stay in HUD-VASH? If there was one thing that you could change about the HUD-VASH program, what would it be?

Would you participate in HUD-VASH again? Why or why not?

Closed-Ended Questions

Thanks for telling me about your experiences with HUD-VASH. Now I'm going to ask you some more specific survey questions about your housing history and experiences in HUD-VASH. (See Appendix A.3a.)

Conclusion

Alright, so I asked very generally about your experiences in HUD-VASH, and then I asked you some survey questions related to your experience. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience with the program that I haven't asked?

Veteran Questionnaire -- Non-Leased Exiter

Housing and Homelessness History

- I want you to think about where you have been living since you enrolled in the HUD-VASH program. We would like to know all of the places where you've stayed during this time, including hospitals. Let's look at this calendar together, and I'll make notes as you talk. Why don't we start with where you are living now and work backwards from there, place by place. *[Refer to CARD 1]*

Location Letter	Date Moved In	Date Moved Out	Location Type (code)	Composition (code)
A.				
B.				
C.				
D.				
E.				
F.				
G.				
H.				

- Using the chart, please point out where you were staying when you obtained a HUD-VASH Voucher.
Choose Location Letter from list above: _____
- Using the chart, please point out where you were staying when you found an apartment with your HUD-VASH voucher
Choose Location Letter from list above: _____

HUD-VASH Housing Process

- How would you describe the different steps involved in getting a voucher?
[Refer to CARD 2 to code each step from Very Difficult to Very Easy]

	Step	Code (from CARD 2)
A.	Enrolling in the HUD-VASH program	
B.	Submitting application to PHA	
C.	Providing documentation of identity and income to Public Housing Authority	

- Did you receive help from your HUD-VASH case manager or other HUD-VASH staff in either of the following steps in obtaining a voucher? *[Check yes or no for each step]*

	Step	Yes (Received Help)	No (Did not receive help)
A.	Getting and attending appointment with the PHA		
B.	Providing proof of identity or income		
C.	Completing and submitting the PHA application		

- Now I want to ask you about your impressions of the condition and location of the apartments that you visited during your housing search. Approximately how many apartments did you visit during your housing search?

_____ apartments

- Of those apartments, how many did you think were:

Acceptable _____

Unacceptable _____

- Had you completed any of the following steps in the housing process before you left the HUD-VASH program?
[Check all steps that Veteran completed before exiting]

	Step	Completed
A	Finding listings of available apartments	
B	Finding an acceptable apartment option	
C	Getting an apartment inspected by PHA	
D	Being selected as a tenant by a landlord	
E	Obtaining money for rent, security deposit or moving costs	

9. Did you receive any assistance looking for apartments?
 - a. No, I searched on my own
 - b. Yes, from friends or family
 - c. Yes, from HUD-VASH program staff such as case manager or housing specialist
 - d. Yes, from staff from the PHA

10. Do you think the HUD-VASH program was a good fit for your needs?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

11. If you answered "No" to the previous question, what is your primary reason?
 - a. I didn't need as much support as the program offered
 - b. I needed greater support than the program offered
 - c. Program had more rules than was acceptable to me
 - d. Housing options I found did not fit my needs
 - e. Other _____

Income, work and school: While enrolled in HUD-VASH

12. What were your sources of income while you were in the HUD-VASH program? *Circle all that apply*
 - a. VA Compensation
 - b. VA Pension
 - c. Social Security Retirement
 - d. SSI
 - e. SSD/I
 - f. Full-time work
 - g. Part-time work
 - h. Other _____

13. Were you involved in any educational or vocational program while enrolled in HUD-VASH?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

HUD-VASH Case Manager Relationship

14. On average, how many times a month did you meet with your case manager when you were enrolled in the program?
 _____ times per month

15. While you were in the HUD-VASH program, how often did the following statements apply to you? *Refer to CARD 4 to code level of agreement with each statement.*

	Statement	Code
A.	My case manager was able to help me.	
B.	My case manager and I agreed on goals.	
C.	My case manager and I had different ideas about what my problems were.	
D.	My case manager and I trusted one another.	

Medical Condition

16. While in the HUD-VASH program, did you have any serious medical problems?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

17. Were you ever hospitalized for any medical problem while in HUD-VASH?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

18. In general, during your time in the HUD-VASH program, how would you describe your health?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very good
 - c. Good
 - d. Fair
 - e. Poor

19. During your time in HUD-VASH, did your health ever limit you from doing any of the following? *Refer to CARD 4 to code how often the Veteran was limited from each task*

	Activity	Code
A.	Bathing or dressing yourself	
B.	Climbing one flight of stairs	
C.	Lifting or carrying groceries	
D.	Cooking for yourself	

Mental Health Condition

20. While in the HUD-VASH program, did you have any serious mental health problems?
 a. Yes
 b. No

21. Were you hospitalized for any mental health problem while in HUD-VASH?
 a. Yes
 b. No

22. During your time in HUD-VASH, how often did you have the following feelings? *Refer to CARD 4 to code how often the Veteran experienced each feeling*

	Feeling	Code
A.	Your mood was good	
B.	Under strain, stress, or pressure	
C.	Bothered by nervousness	
D.	Sad, discouraged, or hopeless	
E.	Like you were losing control over the way you acted, talked, or thought	

Substance Abuse Status

23. While in the HUD-VASH program, how troubled or bothered were you by drugs or alcohol
 a. Not at all
 b. Slightly
 c. Moderately
 d. Considerably
 e. Extremely

24. Did you receive any inpatient or outpatient treatment for drug or alcohol use while in the HUD-VASH program?
 a. Inpatient treatment
 b. Outpatient treatment
 c. Both inpatient and outpatient treatment
 d. No treatment

• Program Exit

25. Did you decide to leave the HUD-VASH program, or were you asked to leave?
 I decided to leave
 I was asked to leave

If you answered "I decided to leave" continue to Question 30. If you answered "I was asked to leave" skip to Question 31.

26. When you decided to leave, did you have plans for a place to live after you left?
 a. Yes
 b. No

27. In your own words, what was the main reason you left the HUD-VASH program? _____

28. Which of the following situations contributed to you leaving the HUD-VASH program? *Check all that apply*
- Couldn't find an available apartment to rent with the HUD-VASH voucher
 - Dissatisfaction with available apartments
 - Apartment that was found did not pass PHA inspection
 - Did not have money to pay for security deposit or furniture
 - Increase in income
 - Conflict with HUD-VASH case manager or other program staff
 - Disagreement with program rules
 - Worsening in medical condition
 - Worsening in mental health condition
 - Worsening in substance abuse condition
 - Improvement in health condition
 - Improvement in mental health condition
 - Improvement in substance abuse condition
 - Legal trouble such as arrest, jail, warrant, probation, lawsuit or trial
 - Offer from family or friend to move in to their housing
 - Voucher revoked by PHA
29. Of the reasons listed, which one best matches the main reason that you left the HUD-VASH program? *[Write the letter corresponding to the reason from list above]* _____
30. Did HUD-VASH staff help you find a new place to stay when you left the program?
- Yes
 - No

Housing Satisfaction: Current Housing

31. How satisfied are you with the following qualities of your current housing?

	Quality	Code
A.	Apartment condition	
B.	Affordability	
C.	Building safety and security	
D.	Access to shopping	
E.	Access to public transportation	
F.	Neighborhood safety	
G.	Opportunities to socialize	

Post-Exit Contact with VA

32. Have you used or do you plan to use VA medical services after leaving the HUD-VASH program?
- Yes
 - No
33. After leaving the HUD-VASH program, are you still in contact with your HUD-VASH case manager?
- Yes
 - No

Income, Work and School: Post-Exit

34. What are your current sources of income?
- VA Compensation
 - VA Pension
 - Social Security Retirement
 - SSI
 - SSD/I
 - Full-time work
 - Part-time work
 - Other _____
35. Are you currently involved in any educational or vocational program?
- Yes
 - No

Veteran Questionnaire -- Non-Leased Exiter, Open-Ended

Introduction

I'd like to start the interview by having you walk me through your experiences in the HUD-VASH program. I'm going to start by asking about how you first learned about the program, and then ask you more specifically about the different steps and components of the program. After that, I will ask you some survey questions about these experiences.

Open-Ended Questions

First, I'd like to ask you some questions about how you learned about HUD-VASH and your initial experiences with the program.

Probes: How did you learn about HUD-VASH? How long did it take for you to enroll in HUD-VASH? Did it take longer than you expected, about what you expected, or less time than you expected? Why?

After you enrolled in HUD-VASH, tell me how you learned about how the program works. Describe your first meeting with your case manager. Did you have an orientation? If so, who was the orientation with (HUD-VASH and/or PHA, jointly/separately)? Was it helpful? Were there things you would have liked to know about the program that you didn't learn about until later in the process? What would you have wanted to know and why?

From the time that you first enrolled in HUD-VASH, describe the process for completing the PHA application and receiving your housing voucher. Is there anything that you feel could have been improved about this process?

Next, tell me about your housing search.

Probes: Was it difficult to find a suitable housing option? Why?

Tell me more about being selected as a tenant by the landlord of the property. Did you have to go through any specific screening processes to be selected as a tenant, such as a criminal background check, credit check or drug test? Were you told about any requirements that you would need to meet in order to stay in permanent housing? If so, what were they (e.g., abstinence, sobriety, treatment)? Were you worried that these requirements would make staying in the program hard for you? If so, which one(s)?

Once you decided on an apartment, describe the process for getting the apartment inspected, and preparing for move-in. Is there anything that you feel could have been improved about this process? Did you receive any additional assistance for move-in, such as assistance with move-in costs or furniture? If so, where did you receive assistance from? How did you learn about available assistance? If not, would you have liked to receive assistance? What kind of assistance would have been helpful?

Where did you stay prior to moving into your HUD-VASH housing unit?

Describe your relationship with your case manager.

Probes: What aspects of your relationship with your case manager were helpful? What aspects were unhelpful? What are some things you would change about your relationship with your case manager and/or the HUD-VASH team?

Did you develop a Housing Recovery Plan with your case manager? If so, when did you make it? How did you decide what to include in your plan? Did you ever change your plan? Why?

What kind of services did you receive through HUD-VASH (e.g., peer support, supported employment)? Did you participate in any HUD-VASH groups? If so, what groups did you participate in?

Tell me about any parts of the HUD-VASH program that you found challenging.

Did you find it difficult to follow any of the rules from the HUD-VASH team or PHA? If so, which one(s)?

Now I'd like to talk for a few minutes about the time when you left the HUD-VASH program.

Probes: When did you first think of leaving the program? Tell me how you came to that decision. What were your feelings about leaving the program? Were you happy to be leaving? Did you want to stay in the program? Why or why not? How were things going for you at the time you left the program? Did any of those things affect your housing situation?

What could have changed that would have made you decide to stay in HUD-VASH? If there was one thing that you could change about the HUD-VASH program, what would it be?

Would you participate in HUD-VASH again? Why or why not?

Closed-Ended Questions

Thanks for telling me about your experiences with HUD-VASH. Now, I'm going to ask you some additional survey questions about these experiences. (See Appendix A.4a.)

Conclusion

Alright, so I asked very generally about your experiences in HUD-VASH, and then I asked you some survey questions related to your experience. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience with the program that I haven't asked?

Veteran Questionnaire -- Response Cards

CARD 1

Location Codes

01	Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher
02	Transitional housing for homeless persons
03	Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons
04	Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility
05	Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center
06	Hospital (non-psychiatric)
07	Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility
08	Family member's room, apartment or house
09	Friend's room, apartment or house
10	Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher
11	Foster care home or foster care group home
12	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, a train station)
13	Safe Haven
14	Rental by client, with HUD-VASH housing subsidy
15	Rental by client, with other (non-VASH) ongoing housing subsidy
16	Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy:
17	Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy
18	Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy
19	Other

Composition Codes

01	Alone
02	With family
03	With friends
04	With other(s), not friends or family

CARD 2

Very difficult	Somewhat difficult	Neither easy nor difficult	Somewhat easy	Very easy
1	2	3	4	5

CARD 3

Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Mostly satisfied	Very satisfied	Completely satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

CARD 4

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4	5

STAFF INTERVIEW MATERIALS

Housing Authority Questionnaire

Introductions

What is your role at the PHA? How long have you worked at the PHA? What is your background and training?

What is your role in housing and services for homeless Veterans?

Describe the general environment for housing homeless Veterans in this community (e.g., discussion of local PHA, landlords, rental market, support from community partners).

Program Overview

First, I'd like to just get a basic idea about how your HUD-VASH program works.

Refer to "Steps in the HUD-VASH Selection, Housing, and Case Management Process" to review steps that may be helpful in describing local practices.

1. Does the PHA have staff dedicated (100% of their time) to HUD-VASH? If so, how many staff? What are staff titles/roles?
2. Imagine you receive a new HUD-VASH referral today. Take me through what happens from now until the Veteran is housed with a HUD-VASH voucher.
3. Has this process changed over time? If so, how (e.g., revised leasing process that functions differently from HCV program)?
4. Does the PHA offer a HUD-VASH orientation for Veterans? If so, how is the orientation conducted? Does the VA case management team play a role in this orientation process?

Eligibility & Application Process

Now let's talk a bit more specifically about how determine Veterans' eligibility for the program and the HUD-VASH voucher application process.

5. What are the eligibility requirements to be considered for a HUD-VASH voucher? Are there any specific local requirements?
6. What are clients required to demonstrate in order obtain a HUD-VASH voucher (e.g., housing readiness)?

7. Does your program have specific performance measures it aims to reach (i.e., does the program aim to enroll a specific number or percentage of participants from the targeted population(s))?
8. How does the PHA process referrals?
9. What is the process for meeting with Veterans and helping them obtain housing vouchers?
10. What do Veterans need to provide in order to complete the PHA application (e.g., proof of identity and income, credit history)?
11. How is Veterans' monthly rental contributions determined? What types of income/benefits are included in determining the rental contribution? Could this amount change? If so, under what circumstances?

Housing Process

Next, I'd like to ask you to describe the housing process in more detail.

12. Does the PHA assist Veterans in their housing search? If so, how?
13. Does the PHA maintain a list of units or landlords that will accept HUD-VASH voucher in order to expedite the leasing process? If so, are the units pre-inspected? How often is the list updated?
14. Do Veterans receive assistance from the PHA in setting up appointments and viewing housing options? If so, what type of assistance, and how is it provided (e.g., transportation by community partner)?
15. How many apartments are typically viewed by each Veteran before a unit is selected?
16. Does the PHA assist Veterans in being selected by landlords for housing? If so, how?
17. Describe the process for scheduling a HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection. On average, how long does it take for an inspection to be scheduled after the Veteran makes a housing selection? If a unit fails inspection, how long does it take to schedule a reinspection? Does the PHA allow case managers to ensure that all issues have been resolved to expedite reinspection (i.e., deputize case managers)?
18. Describe the process for setting up the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract.
19. What are the challenges that might lead to Veterans exiting the HUD-VASH program before being housed? What has your team done to address these challenges?
20. How many different staff at the PHA typically interact with the Veteran during the application and lease-up process? How many times does each Veteran typically meet with the PHA before they are housed?
21. On average, how long does it take a Veteran to obtain housing (from admission to move-in)? What is the typical range? Are there common barriers that tend to make this process take longer? What barriers are specific to the PHA and VA? How can they be addressed by either the PHA or VA?
22. Tell me about the annual HUD-VASH recertification and HQS inspection process.

Communication with VA

I'd now like to get a better idea of your overall communication with VA.

23. Describe the communication the PHA has with the VA case management team. Does the HUD field office assist in facilitating communication?
24. Does PHA staff meet regularly with the VA case management team? If so, how often do meetings take place? What is discussed during meetings?
25. Is training provided to PHA staff (either by the PHA or VA) to review local policies and procedures? If so, describe the training.
26. Do the PHA and VA case management team exchange data on participants? If so, what type of data is shared (e.g., participant outcomes), how often is data reviewed, and what is the process for reviewing data?

Program Exits

We’re also interested on your thoughts as to why Veterans exit HUD-VASH—both for positive and negative reasons.

27. What are the most common reasons that Veterans exit the HUD-VASH program?
28. Are there any requirements that Veterans must meet to stay in permanent housing that could be related to Veteran exits? If so, what are they (e.g., sobriety/treatment)? Are they PHA or VA rules?
29. How do PHA staff typically find out a client is experiencing housing problems (e.g., Veteran, VA, landlords)? Do the PHA and VA case management team communicate about existing or potential housing problems? If housing issues arise, does the PHA and/or VA case management team get involved? What is done to help ensure that the Veteran maintains their housing (e.g., PHA notifies VA case management team prior to taking adverse action against Veteran)?
30. In general, what could be done by the PHA and/or the VA to mitigate negative exits and ensure more Veterans successfully maintain housing? Could further assistance be provided by HUD, VA, or other community partners? What type of assistance is needed?
31. What is the process for terminating a Veteran from the HUD-VASH program? Are different processes applied for HUD-VASH than the regular voucher program? If so, why?
32. Describe the process that takes place when the termination of a Veteran’s HUD-VASH voucher by the PHA is imminent. Does the PHA contact the VA case management team to try to mitigate the cause for termination prior to taking adverse action? Describe the communication that takes place between the PHA and the VA case management team. Could this process be improved? If so, how?

Organizational Aspects

Finally, let’s talk about the PHA’s goals for HUD-VASH and any challenges staff might face in reaching those goals.

33. What are the stated goals for the HUD-VASH program at this PHA (e.g., utilizing vouchers, housing the most vulnerable Veterans, eliminating Veteran homelessness)? Do these goals differ for VA and/or other community partners? If so, how?
34. Are these goals supported by senior leadership at the PHA? If so, how?
35. Are these goals supported by VA and/or other community partners? If so, how?
36. Does the PHA have the resources necessary to meet these goals? If not, what other resources are necessary?
37. How do you measure/evaluate the program’s progress in meeting its goals? Has this changed over time? If so, why?
38. How would you “rate” your progress in meeting these goals to date?
39. What are the consequences for insufficient progress in meeting the program’s goals?
40. Do you review processes and make process improvements? If so, how is the review done? How often? How are improvements made? Are the VA case management team and/or other community partners included in these reviews and process improvements? If so, what is their role?
41. How does the PHA support strong networks within the PHA and with the VA and other community partners to ensure that everyone involved in housing homeless Veterans is working together?
42. What are the key facilitators and barriers to housing homeless Veterans at the PHA?
43. What do you see as the biggest challenge the PHA faces in trying to house homeless Veterans?

Wrap-up

44. Is there anything else you would like to share about the HUD-VASH program?
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VA Case Management Team Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Please complete the following questionnaire, and provide a copy of Veteran screening and/or eligibility tools with your responses.

Program Characteristics

How many HUD-VASH vouchers are allocated to your facility?	_____ # Vouchers Allocated (FY08-Present)
	_____ # Filled / In Use _____ # Not filled / Available for Use
	Of those vouchers currently available for use, how many are:
	_____ Pending PHA process _____ Not yet assigned _____ Other

What is your average VA case management / HUD-VASH staff to Veteran ratio?	_____ : _____
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From which VA settings are Veterans recruited or outreached? Check all that apply.	
VA Settings:	
Street outreach initiated by VA staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justice system outreach initiated by VA staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other community outreach by VA staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stand Down	<input type="checkbox"/>
VA MH RRTP (DCHV, CWT / TR, SAR RTP, General RRTP)	<input type="checkbox"/>
VA substance abuse outpatient unit	<input type="checkbox"/>
VA mental health outpatient unit	<input type="checkbox"/>
VA medical outpatient unit	<input type="checkbox"/>
VA emergency room	<input type="checkbox"/>
VA inpatient unit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vet Center / Drop-In Clinic	<input type="checkbox"/>
VBA	<input type="checkbox"/>
VA Homeless Veterans Hotline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

From which non-VA settings are Veterans recruited or outreached? Check all that apply.	
Non-VA Settings:	
a. Street outreach initiated by non-VA staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Criminal justice system	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Shelter staff or other community homeless services provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. VA Grant and Per Diem	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Non-VA community mental health center or clinic	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Non-VA emergency room	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Other federal agency (HUD, DoL, HHS)	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Family member	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Self	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Other, specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix C: Methods

Which population(s) does your facility target for admission to the HUD-VASH program? Check all that apply.	
Veterans experiencing homelessness continuously for 1 year or longer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Veterans having 4 or more separate episodes of homelessness over a 3 year period	<input type="checkbox"/>
Veterans at risk for becoming homeless (e.g., doubled up, coming out of jail or hospital, couch surfing, temporarily with friends / family)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female Veterans	<input type="checkbox"/>
OEF / OIF / OND Veterans	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young adults, ages 18-25	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older adults, ages 55 and over	<input type="checkbox"/>
Families	<input type="checkbox"/>
Substance abuse or dependence only	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mentally ill only	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-occurring substance use and mental illness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Services

Please indicate the types of staff your agency makes available to HUD-VASH participants, indicating whether the position is funded through HUD-VASH, the VA, or a community partner. Check all that apply.				
	HUD-VASH Funded	VA Funded	Funded by Community Partner	Primary Service Location (VA, community, Veteran home)
Psychiatrist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Psychologist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Social worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Substance abuse counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Mental health counselor / Professional counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Mental illness / Chemical abuse (MICA) counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Trauma specialist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Vocational specialist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Housing specialist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Case manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Peer advocate / Peer specialist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Physician	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Nurse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Discharge planning specialist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Psychosocial rehabilitation counselor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Education specialist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other, specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Appendix C: Methods

Please indicate if Veterans receive any of the following services, and if so, whether the services are provided directly through the VAMC or through referral to other community organizations. Check all that apply.		
Name of Service	Provided to HUD-VASH Veterans at VAMC	Provided to HUD-VASH Veterans by other community organizations
OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SCREENING	<i>Leave blank. Respond to sub-items individually.</i>	
Mental disorders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Substance abuse or dependence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-occurring substance use and mental disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trauma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TREATMENT SERVICES - Substance abuse (SA) treatment	<i>Leave blank. Respond to sub-items individually.</i>	
Assessment (e.g., diagnostic and more in depth)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SA outpatient treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SA inpatient / residential treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pharmacotherapy (e.g., Methadone / Buprenorphine)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detox	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TREATMENT SERVICES - Mental health (MH) treatment	<i>Leave blank. Respond to sub-items individually.</i>	
Assessment (e.g., diagnostic and more in depth)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MH outpatient treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MH inpatient / residential treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pharmacotherapy (e.g., anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, anti-anxiety medications)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TREATMENT SERVICES - Integrated substance abuse and mental health treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TREATMENT SERVICES - Trauma / PTSD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEDICAL SERVICES	<i>Leave blank. Respond to sub-items individually.</i>	
General medical treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialized medical care for women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medication / medication management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WRAP AROUND SERVICES	<i>Leave blank. Respond to sub-items individually.</i>	
Case management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discharge planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crisis care (e.g., 24 hour crisis response service)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peer-to-peer support / Self-help groups (e.g., AA / NA, other 12-step peer support, non 12-step approaches)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peer mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocation and employment services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education / GED program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support services for families (e.g., parenting skills / education, childcare, domestic violence services)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Benefits application (e.g., SSI / SSD, food stamps)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix C: Methods

HOUSING SERVICES	<i>Leave blank. Respond to sub-items individually.</i>	
Assistance in getting and attending appointment(s) with the PHA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance in providing documents required for the PHA application (e.g., proof of identity or income)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance in completing and submitting the PHA application	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing search assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Independent living skills / Daily living skills (e.g., budgeting, food shopping, cleaning, hygiene)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance with getting essential move-in items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance with moving belongings into the apartment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance with setting up utilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community integration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) are you implementing at your site?	
EBP / Promising or Best Practice Name	Has your agency ever implemented this EBP?
Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harm Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/>
Motivational Interviewing (MI)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transtheoretical Model (TTM) / Stages of Change	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twelve Step Facilitation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Critical Time Intervention (CTI)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intensive Case Management (ICM)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peer Support / Mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>
SSI / SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supported Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing First	<input type="checkbox"/>

Challenges

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the following barriers impact implementation and / or service delivery for the HUD-VASH program.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Difficulties hiring qualified staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulties retaining qualified staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shortfalls in recruiting or enrolling target Veterans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Veteran reluctance to access HUD-VASH services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulties retaining target Veterans in HUD-VASH program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulties following up with Veterans in HUD-VASH program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulties providing services as planned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Existing agency rules or regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Copy of Veteran screening and/or eligibility tools with responses to this questionnaire attached.

VA Case Management Team Questionnaire

Introductions

What is your role at VA? How long have you worked at VA? What is your background and training?

What is your role in housing and services for homeless Veterans?

Describe the general environment for housing homeless Veterans in this community (e.g., discussion of local PHA, landlords, rental market, support from community partners).

Program Overview

First, I'd like to just get a basic idea about how your HUD-VASH program works.

Refer to "Steps in the HUD-VASH Selection, Housing, and Case Management Process" to review steps that may be helpful in describing local practices.

45. How many staff are dedicated to HUD-VASH? What are staff titles/roles?
2. Imagine a new client walks in today. Take me through what happens from now until the Veteran is housed with a HUD-VASH voucher.
3. Has this process changed over time? If so, how?

Targeting & Eligibility

Now let's talk a bit more specifically about how you target Veterans for the program and determine their eligibility.

Refer to VA Pre-Interview Questionnaire to review target populations.

4. How do you identify and outreach to Veterans who need housing?
5. What are the eligibility requirements to be considered for a HUD-VASH voucher? Are there any specific local requirements?
6. How do you determine who should be targeted for admission to HUD-VASH (e.g., federal requirements, input from community partners)?
7. To what degree does your program serve these targeted groups? Do you... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit and enroll only participants who match all of your target population criteria? • Recruit participants who match target population criteria and give them priority enrollment, but if there are open slots, accept others who don't match some criteria? • Not focus recruitment based on target population criteria but give priority enrollment to those who meet the criteria? • Not focus recruitment based on target population criteria and enroll anyone who needs and will benefit from your services and programs?
8. Does your program have specific performance measures it aims to reach (i.e., does the program aim to enroll a specific number or percentage of participants from the targeted population(s))?
9. What, if anything, are clients required to demonstrate in order to be eligible for admission to the program (e.g., sobriety/treatment)? What, if anything, are clients required to demonstrate in order obtain a HUD-VASH voucher (e.g., housing readiness)?

Housing Process

Next, I'd like to ask you to describe the housing process in more detail—from referral to the PHA for a HUD-VASH voucher through housing selection and move-in.

Refer to VA Pre-Interview Questionnaire to review housing services.

10. Does the VA case management team offer a HUD-VASH orientation for Veterans? If so, how is the orientation conducted? Does the PHA play a role in this orientation process?
11. Does the VA case management team assist clients with their PHA applications? If so, how?
12. Does the VA case management team assist Veterans in their housing search? If so, how?
13. Does the VA case management team maintain a list of units or landlords that will accept HUD-VASH voucher in order to expedite the leasing process? If so, are the units pre-inspected? How often is the list updated?
14. Do Veterans receive assistance from the VA case management team in setting up appointments and viewing housing options? If so, what type of assistance, and how is it provided (e.g., transportation by community partner)?
15. How many apartments are typically viewed by each Veteran before a unit is selected?
16. Does the VA case management team assist Veterans in being selected by landlords for housing? If so, how?
17. Describe the process for working with the PHA to schedule a HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection. On average, how long does it take for an inspection to be scheduled after the Veteran makes a housing selection? If a unit fails inspection, how long does it take to schedule a reinspection? Does the PHA allow case managers to ensure that all issues have been resolved to expedite reinspection (i.e., deputize case managers)?
18. Describe the process for working with the PHA to set up a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract.
19. What are the challenges that might lead to Veterans exiting the HUD-VASH program before being housed? What has your team done to address these challenges?
20. Do clients receive any type of move-in assistance? If so, what type of assistance is provided (e.g., financial assistance, provision of household goods)? How is it funded/provided (e.g., community partners)?
21. How many different staff at the VA typically interact with each Veteran during the application and lease-up process? How many times does each Veteran typically meet with the VA case management team before they are housed?
22. On average, how long does it take a Veteran to obtain housing (from admission to move-in)? What is the typical range? Are there common barriers that tend to make this process take longer? What barriers are specific to VA and the PHA? How can they be addressed by either VA or the PHA?
23. Tell me about the annual HUD-VASH recertification and HQS inspection process.

Communication with PHA

I'd now like to get a better idea of your overall communication with the PHA.

24. Describe the communication the VA case management team has with the PHA. Does the HUD field office assist in facilitating communication?
25. Does the VA case management team meet regularly with PHA staff? If so, how often do meetings take place? What is discussed during meetings?
26. Is training provided to the VA case management team (either by the VA or PHA) to review local policies and procedures? If so, describe the training.
27. Do the VA case management team and PHA staff exchange data on participants? If so, what type of data is shared (e.g., participant outcomes), how often is data reviewed, and what is the process for reviewing data?

VA Case Management

Let's speak a little bit more about Veterans' interactions with the VA case management team. I encourage you to reflect on Veterans' experiences with case management for their full time in the program, from enrollment, through the housing selection process, and on until their final exit from the program.

Refer to VA Pre-Interview Questionnaire to ask for further details on VA staff and services.

28. Do VA case managers meet regularly with clients? If so, describe a typical meeting. How often are meetings held? Does the number of meetings change over time? If so, how? Where do VA case managers meet with clients?
29. Do VA case managers develop Housing Recovery Plans with Veterans? If so, what is the process for creating these plans? At what point in the housing process is this done? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is the process for determining Veteran goals? (<i>Stated HUD-VASH Housing Recovery Plan Goals = Establishing housing stability (rent paid, following rules, etc.); Meeting employment and income needs; Resolving legal and financial issues (credit history); Supporting physical, mental, social health</i>) b. How is progress towards goals monitored? c. Can the Housing Recovery Plan be revised? If so, when would the plan be revised, and what is the process for revising it? (<i>Stated examples of necessary revision = Goals reached; Treatment needs change; Veteran goals change; Veteran becomes more independent; Level of care changes</i>)
30. Once Veterans are housed, what are the next steps? How do you engage Veterans in services? How do you keep them engaged?
31. How are Veterans referred to services? Who provides services? Is there a coordinated effort between VA and other community partners?
32. How does the VA case management team help integrate Veterans into the local community?
33. How does the VA case management team typically find out a client is in crisis/experiencing <u>personal problems</u> (e.g., Veteran, PHA, landlord)? How do VA case managers respond to clients in crisis? Are services available 24/7? If so, how (e.g., case manager on-call, via on-call psychologist)?
34. How does the VA case management team typically find out a client is experiencing <u>housing problems</u> (e.g., Veteran, PHA, landlord)? Do the VA case management team and the PHA communicate about existing or potential housing problems? If housing issues arise, do the VA case management team and/or PHA get involved? What is done to help ensure that the Veteran maintains their housing (e.g., PHA notifies VA case management team prior to taking adverse action against Veteran)?

Program Exiters

We’re also interested on your thoughts as to why Veterans exit HUD-VASH—both for positive and negative reasons.

35. What are the most common reasons that Veterans exit the HUD-VASH program?														
36. Can Veterans “graduate” from the program? If so, how? What are the factors that help Veterans successfully exit the program for positive reasons?														
37. What are the most common reasons that Veterans fail to lease housing or are terminated from the program for negative reasons? What are the factors that make it challenging for Veteran to stay in the program?														
38. Are there any requirements that Veterans must meet to stay in permanent housing that could be related to Veteran exits? If so, what are they (e.g., sobriety/treatment)? Are they VA or PHA rules?														
39. How are exiters categorized as positive or negative in HOMES? Are there additional categories of exits that should be added to HOMES? <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"><i>HOMES Categories</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Accomplish goals and no longer has a need for program</i></td> <td><i>Transferred to another program site</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Found other housing</i></td> <td><i>Did not comply with case management</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Eviction or other housing related issues or problems</i></td> <td><i>Unhappy with housing</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>No longer financially eligible</i></td> <td><i>No longer interested in participating</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Cannot be located</i></td> <td><i>Too ill to participate in program</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Incarceration</i></td> <td><i>Death</i></td> </tr> </table>	<i>HOMES Categories</i>		<i>Accomplish goals and no longer has a need for program</i>	<i>Transferred to another program site</i>	<i>Found other housing</i>	<i>Did not comply with case management</i>	<i>Eviction or other housing related issues or problems</i>	<i>Unhappy with housing</i>	<i>No longer financially eligible</i>	<i>No longer interested in participating</i>	<i>Cannot be located</i>	<i>Too ill to participate in program</i>	<i>Incarceration</i>	<i>Death</i>
<i>HOMES Categories</i>														
<i>Accomplish goals and no longer has a need for program</i>	<i>Transferred to another program site</i>													
<i>Found other housing</i>	<i>Did not comply with case management</i>													
<i>Eviction or other housing related issues or problems</i>	<i>Unhappy with housing</i>													
<i>No longer financially eligible</i>	<i>No longer interested in participating</i>													
<i>Cannot be located</i>	<i>Too ill to participate in program</i>													
<i>Incarceration</i>	<i>Death</i>													
40. In general, what could be done by the VA and/or the PHA to mitigate negative exits and ensure more Veterans successfully maintain housing? Could further assistance be provided by VA, HUD or other community partners? What type of assistance is needed?														
41. What is the process for terminating a Veteran from the HUD-VASH program?														

- | |
|---|
| 42. Describe the process that takes place when the termination of a Veteran’s HUD-VASH voucher by the PHA is imminent. Does the PHA contact the VA case management team to try to mitigate the cause for termination prior to taking adverse action? Describe the communication that takes place between the PHA and the VA case management team. Could this process be improved? If so, how? |
| 43. When Veterans exit the program, are they referred to VA services to ensure continuity of care (e.g., primary care, specialty care, etc.)? |
| 44. Do VA case managers continue to stay in touch with participants after they have left the HUD-VASH program? |

Organizational Aspects

Finally, let’s talk about the team’s goals for HUD-VASH and any challenges the team might face in reaching those goals.

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|--|
| 45. What are the stated goals for your HUD-VASH program here at this VA (e.g., utilizing vouchers, housing the most vulnerable Veterans, eliminating Veteran homelessness)? Do these goals differ for the PHA and/or other community partners? If so, how? |
| 46. Are these goals supported by senior leadership at the VA? If so, how? |
| 47. Are these goals supported by the PHA and/or other community partners? If so, how? |
| 48. Does the VA case management team have the resources necessary to meet these goals? If not, what other resources are necessary? |
| 49. How do you measure and evaluate the program’s progress in meeting its goals? Has this changed over time? If so, why? |
| 50. How would you “rate” your progress to date? |
| 51. What are the consequences for insufficient progress in meeting the program’s goals? |
| 52. Do you review processes to make process improvements? If so, how is the review done? How often? How are improvements made? Are the PHA and/or other community partners included in these reviews and process improvements? If so, what is their role? |
| 53. How does the VA case management team support strong networks within the VA and with the PHA and other community partners to ensure that everyone involved in housing homeless Veterans is working together? |
| 54. What are the key facilitators and barriers to housing homeless Veterans at the VA? |
| 55. What do you see as the biggest challenge the VA case management team faces in trying to house homeless Veterans? |

Wrap-up

- | |
|--|
| 56. Is there anything else you would like to share about the HUD-VASH program? |
|--|

QUANTITATIVE VARIABLES & ANALYSES

Power Analysis

Using the statistical software program PASS 2008 (Hintze, 2008), the research team determined the sample size required to obtain 80% power to significantly detect an odds ratio up to 2.0 from a logistic regression analysis predicting study outcomes, given: (1) at least 30 percent of the sample were exiters, based on national HUD-VASH data collected during FFY 2008–2011 indicating that one-third of Veterans exited the program; (2) at least 15 percent of the sample indicated a positive response on one of the primary predictor variables (e.g., inpatient hospital stays); and (3) an alpha of 0.05. Expected participation rates were 50 percent for stayers and 40 percent for exiters (Wong, Hadley, & Culhane, 2006) and did not distinguish between types of exiters (i.e., leased-up vs. non-leased). Exiters were not over-sampled as there was an insufficient sample pool.

Because the initial sample size analyses were based on limited data and educated guesses, the research team also conducted post-hoc power analyses following the regression and survival models conducted in this study given: (1) the size of both the HUD-VASH participant sample as well as the subsample of study respondents only, (2) an alpha of 0.05, (3) the number of predictor variables included in each model, and (4) either the overall model R² statistic obtained from multiple regression analyses or the magnitude of key odds and hazard ratios from logistic regression and Cox Proportional Hazards survival analyses, respectively. Given these parameters, power for all models ranged between 95 percent and 99 percent.

Variables

The research team accessed administrative data for the period beginning 12 months prior to a Veteran’s admission to HUD-VASH and 12 months following discharge from HUD-VASH, if applicable. Exhibit C.1 provides details on administrative data variables.

Exhibit C.1 Administrative data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
HUD-VASH Data				
Study site	HOMES	VAMC where Veterans enrolled in HUD-VASH	Houston Los Angeles Palo Alto Philadelphia	Nominal
Study group	HOMES	Veterans who were admitted to the HUD-VASH program and obtained a HUD-VASH voucher met specific criteria for one of three study groups	Stayers—Obtained a lease with a HUD-VASH voucher and remained in the housing unit with the voucher for 600 days or longer and did not exit the program Leased-up exiters—Discharged from HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit, regardless of reason for exit Non-leased exiters—Discharged from HUD-VASH after obtaining a voucher but prior to leasing a housing unit, regardless of reason for exit	Nominal
Year of program admission	HOMES	Most recent year of Veterans’ enrollment in HUD-VASH	2008 or before through 2014	Interval, years
Housing First	HOMES	Whether a Veteran entered HUD-VASH after the policy shift to a Housing First approach in FY 2013	Pre-Housing First—entered HUD-VASH prior to 2013 Housing First—entered HUD-VASH in 2013 or later	Dichotomous

Exhibit C.1 Administrative data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Process timeframes	HOMES	Program dates were entered by VA case managers as HUD-VASH steps were completed; process timeframes were calculated as the number of days between two program dates	Program dates were entered for the following HUD-VASH steps: Referral Assessment Admission HA referral Receipt of voucher Housing selection Inspection Execution of HAP Contract Move-in Exit* *Note: since stayers did not have an exit date, their length of stay is calculated using the end of the study's observation period, 12/02/2014	Interval, days
VA case management contacts	VA Medical Record	Number of VA case management contacts entered by VA case managers	VA case management contacts were provided for the following time periods: 30 days prior to admission Between admission and HA referral Between HA referral and receipt of voucher Between receipt of voucher and move-in 30 days post-move-in 31-60 days post-move-in 61-90 days post-move-in 91-180 days post-move-in 181-360 days post-move-in 361-720 days post-move-in 30 days post-exit 31-60 days post-exit 61-90 days post-exit	Interval, number of contacts calculated as a monthly average (i.e., average number of contacts in a 30 days period)
Demographics				
Gender	VA Medical Record	Veteran sex	Male Female	Dichotomous
Age		Veteran age in years	<35 35-44 45-54 55-64 ≥65	Ordinal categories were used in descriptive findings; interval age in years was used in models
Race	VA Medical Record	Veteran race	Black or African America White Other	Nominal
Ethnicity	VA Medical Record	Veteran ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino Multiple	Nominal

Exhibit C.1 Administrative data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Marital status	VA Medical Record	Veteran marital status	Married Widowed Separated Divorced Never married	Nominal
VA enrollment priority group	VA Medical Record	Veterans' priority for healthcare identified at the time of enrollment for VHA healthcare, based on Veteran's level of disability, exposure to certain hazards, and income	≥50% SC disability <50% SC disability No SC disability; Medicaid-eligible No SC disability; Not Medicaid-eligible Other	Ordinal categories were used in descriptive findings; categories were collapsed into a dichotomous variable in models to indicate any service-connected disability versus no service-connected disability
Period of service	VA Medical Record	Military era in which the Veteran served	World War II (12/1941–12/1946) Korean War (7/1950–1/1955) Vietnam Era (8/1964–4/1975) Post-Vietnam (5/1975–7/1990) Persian Gulf War (8/1990–present) Other	Nominal
OEF/OIF deployment	VA Medical Record	Whether the Veteran was deployed during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Iraqi Freedom (OIF), or New Dawn (OND)	Deployment in OEF/OIF/OND No deployment in OEF/OIF/OND	Nominal
Combat exposure	VA Medical Record	Whether the Veteran was exposed to combat while serving in the military	Combat exposure No combat exposure	Nominal

Exhibit C.1 Administrative data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Medical And Mental/Behavioral Health Conditions and Service Utilization				
Medical conditions	VA Medical Record	If, during the 12 months prior to program admission, the Veteran had either one inpatient stay or two outpatient visits more than 30 days apart and the primary diagnosis associated with these visits were consistent with the 25 medical conditions defined by Elixhauser and colleagues (1998), as well as TBI based on ICD-9 codes (National Center for Health Statistics, 1980) (Brenner, Ignacio, & Blow, 2001)	Any medical condition (includes all subcategories) Hypertension Diabetes, uncomplicated Chronic pulmonary disease Obesity Traumatic brain injury	Dichotomous
Mental/behavioral health conditions	VA Medical Record	If, during the 12 months prior to program admission, the Veteran had either one inpatient stay or two outpatient visits more than 30 days apart and the primary diagnosis associated with these visits were consistent with the four mental/behavioral health conditions defined by Elixhauser and colleagues (1998), as well as schizophrenia, PTSD, and suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury based on ICD-9 codes (National Center for Health Statistics, 1980) (Kimerling, Gima, Smith, Street, & Frayne, 2007)	Any mental/behavioral health condition (includes all mental health subcategories) Any substance use condition (alcohol and/or drug abuse) Post-traumatic stress disorder Depression Psychoses Schizophrenia Alcohol abuse Drug abuse Suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury	Dichotomous

Exhibit C.1 Administrative data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Medical services	VA Medical Record	Receipt of outpatient or inpatient medical services	Service utilization was examined for the following time periods: 90 days prior to entry 90 days post entry 90 days post move-in 90 days pre-exit 30 days post-exit 31-90 days post-exit 91-180 days post-exit 181-360 days post-exit	Outpatient service use was measured using the interval number of visits; inpatient service use was measured using a dichotomous variable; inpatient length of stay was measured using the interval number of days
Mental/behavioral health services	VA Medical Record	Receipt of outpatient or inpatient mental/behavioral health services	Service utilization was examined for the following time periods: 90 days prior to entry 90 days post entry 90 days post move-in 90 days pre-exit 30 days post-exit 31-90 days post-exit 91-180 days post-exit 181-360 days post-exit	Outpatient service use was measured using the interval number of visits; inpatient service use was measured using a dichotomous variable; inpatient length of stay was measured using the interval number of days
Substance use services	VA Medical Record	Receipt of outpatient or inpatient substance use services	Service utilization was examined for the following time periods: 90 days prior to entry 90 days post entry 90 days post move-in 90 days pre-exit 30 days post-exit 31-90 days post-exit 91-180 days post-exit 181-360 days post-exit	Outpatient service use was measured using the interval number of visits; inpatient service use was measured using a dichotomous variable; inpatient length of stay was measured using the interval number of days
Emergency care	VA Medical Record	Emergency department admission	Service utilization was examined for the following time periods: 90 days prior to entry 90 days post entry 90 days post move-in 90 days pre-exit 30 days post-exit 31-90 days post-exit 91-180 days post-exit 181-360 days post-exit	Dichotomous

Exhibit C.1 Administrative data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Exits				
Reason for exit	HOMES	When a Veteran exits HUD-VASH, VA case managers indicate why Veterans ended their involvement in HUD-VASH case management	Accomplished goals or obtained access to services and no longer needs program Cannot be located Deceased Evicted by HA or landlord or other housing issues Found/chose other housing Incarcerated No longer financially eligible No longer interested in participating in HUD-VASH Noncompliance with HUD-VASH case management Too ill to participate in HUD-VASH Transferred to another HUD-VASH program site Unhappy with HUD-VASH housing Other	Nominal
Return to VA homeless programs	HOMES	HUD-VASH participants who exited the program could utilize VA homeless programs following their exit	VA homeless program use was examined for the following time periods: Any (return between exit and end of study's observation period, 12/02/2014) Within 30 days Within 60 days Within 90 days Within 180 days Within 360 days	Dichotomous

Interviewers at each study site used an interview protocol to conduct in-person, one-on-one interviews with a subsample of HUD-VASH participants. (referred to here as “study respondents”) either on-site at VAMC facilities or over the telephone. Exhibit C.2 provides details on survey respondent data variables.

ExhibitC.2 Survey respondent data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Study respondent	Sample of Veterans that responded to close-ended, quantitative interviews at each study site	Study respondent Not a study respondent	Dichotomous
Qualitative respondent	Subsample of study respondents that completed an additional semi-structured qualitative interview	Qualitative respondent Not a qualitative respondent	Dichotomous

Exhibit C.2 Survey respondent data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Living situation during HUD-VASH housing process	Veteran living situation at two points in HUD-VASH housing process: (1) voucher receipt and (2) apartment selection	Emergency shelter Place not meant for human habitation Permanent housing Transitional housing for homeless person Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center Family member or friend's room, apartment or house	Nominal
Ease of HUD-VASH enrollment and housing process	Specific measures: Enrolling in the HUD-VASH program Submitting applications to HA Providing documentation of identity and income to HA Finding listings of available apartments Finding an acceptable apartment option Getting an apartment inspected by HA Being selected as a tenant by a landlord Obtaining money for rent, security deposit, moving costs	Scale ranging from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy)	Ordinal
Steps completed in the housing process by non-leased exiters before exit	Specific measures: Finding listing of available apartments Finding an acceptable apartment option Getting an apartment inspected by HA Being selected as a tenant by a landlord Obtaining money for rent, security deposit, moving costs	Completed Not completed	Dichotomous
Number of apartments visited during housing search	Veteran provided a count of the number of apartments viewed	None One Two Three Four or more	Ordinal
Proportion of "acceptable" apartments	Proportion of apartment that the Veteran viewed that were deemed "acceptable" to live in		Interval, %
Reason for apartment choice	Veteran's primary reason for selecting apartment	Location/neighborhood Good repair/quality Particular features of apartment I didn't have a choice	Nominal
Comfort during first few nights in apartment	Veteran's feeling or comfort or discomfort during first nights in apartment	Not comfortable Moderately comfortable Very comfortable	Ordinal
Services received during housing process and move-in	Specific measures: Assistance getting and receiving appointment with HA Assistance providing proof of identity or income Assistance completing and submitting HA application Assistance finding apartment options Assistance getting essential move-in items Assistance moving belongings into the apartment Assistance setting up utilities	Received assistance Did not receive assistance	Dichotomous

Exhibit C.2 Survey respondent data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Housing satisfaction while in HUD-VASH	Specific measure: Apartment condition Affordability Building safety and security Access to shopping* Access to public transportation** Neighborhood safety Opportunities to socialize	Scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied)	Ordinal
Housing satisfaction after exit	Specific measures: Apartment condition Affordability Building safety and security Access to shopping* Access to public transportation** Neighborhood safety Opportunities to socialize	Scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied)	Ordinal
Difference in housing satisfaction of leased-up exiters while in HUD-VASH and after	Specific measures: Apartment condition Affordability Building safety and security Access to shopping Access to public transportation Neighborhood safety Opportunities to socialize	Comparison of mean housing satisfaction while in HUD-VASH and after exit	% change
Veteran believes HUD-VASH was a good fit for his/her needs	Whether the Veteran believed HUD-VASH was a good fit	Yes No	Dichotomous
Reason Veteran does not believe HUD-VASH was a good fit for his/her needs	If Veteran did not believe HUD-VASH was a good fit, reason why	Did not need as much support as offered Needed more support than offered Program had more rules than acceptable Housing unit did not fit needs Other	Nominal
Self-reported number of monthly meetings with VA case manager	Number of times Veteran indicated that they usually met with the VA case manager each month	Do not meet with case manager Less than once per month Once per month One to two times per month More than twice per month	Ordinal
VA case management satisfaction	Specific measures: My case manager was able to help me My case manager and I agreed on goals My case manager and I had the same ideas about what my problems were My case manager and I trusted each other	Scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always)	Ordinal; models included a dichotomous variable indicating whether Veterans agreed that the VA case manager was able to help usually (4) or always (5) or not (1-3)
Self-reported health status	Veteran's view of their health while in HUD-VASH	Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor	Ordinal

Exhibit C.2 Survey respondent data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Self-reported medical problems	Specific measures: Experienced serious medical problems Hospitalized for medical problem Experienced serious medical problems AND were hospitalized for medical problem	Yes No	Dichotomous
Self-reported being “troubled” by drugs/alcohol	Veteran’s perspective of being “troubled or bothered” by drugs or alcohol while in HUD-VASH	Not at all Slightly Moderately Considerably Extremely	Ordinal
Self-reported drug/alcohol treatment	Veteran’s perceived use of drug or alcohol treatment while in HUD-VASH	Inpatient Outpatient Both inpatient and outpatient No treatment	Nominal
Factors contributing to exit	Veterans was able to select any of the following as factors contributing to their exit: Apartment that was found did not pass inspection Conflict with HUD-VASH case manager or other program staff Conflict with landlord Conflict with neighbors Couldn’t find an available apartment to rent with voucher Did not have money to pay for security deposit or furniture Difficulty paying the rent Disagreement with program rules Dissatisfaction with apartment Dissatisfaction with available apartments Dissatisfaction with neighborhood Evicted from apartment Improvement in health condition Improvement in mental health condition Improvement in substance abuse condition Increase in income Legal trouble such as arrest, jail, warrant, probation, lawsuit or trial Offer from family or friend to move into their housing Voucher revoked by HA Worsening in medical condition Worsening in mental health condition Worsening in substance abuse condition	Yes No	Dichotomous

Exhibit C.2 Survey respondent data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Type</i>
Main reason for exit	Of all of the factors contributing to an exit, Veteran was asked to select the main reason	Apartment that was found did not pass inspection Conflict with HUD-VASH case manager or other program staff Conflict with landlord Conflict with neighbors Couldn't find an available apartment to rent with voucher Did not have money to pay for security deposit or furniture Difficulty paying the rent Disagreement with program rules Dissatisfaction with apartment Dissatisfaction with available apartments Dissatisfaction with neighborhood Evicted from apartment Improvement in health condition Improvement in mental health condition Improvement in substance abuse condition Increase in income Legal trouble such as arrest, jail, warrant, probation, lawsuit or trial Offer from family or friend to move into their housing Voucher revoked by HA Worsening in medical condition Worsening in mental health condition Worsening in substance abuse condition	Nominal
Exit type	Whether the Veteran decided to leave HUD-VASH or was asked to leave	Voluntary Involuntary	Dichotomous
Plans for living arrangement following voluntary exit	If Veteran decided to leave, whether he/she had a plan for a place to live after exiting	Plan No plan	Dichotomous
VA case manager assisted in finding new place to stay following exit	Whether the VA case manager helped Veteran find a new place to stay after exiting HUD-VASH	Yes No	Dichotomous
Plan to continue utilizing VA services	Whether the Veteran plans to use VA medical services after exiting HUD-VASH	Yes No	Dichotomous
Ongoing contact with VA case manager	Whether the Veteran still has contact with VA case manager	Yes No	Dichotomous

Multiple Regression Analysis Modeling Duration of Housing Process (Exhibit 5.2)

To identify factors related to the speed at which a Veteran proceeded through the HUD-VASH housing process, the research team conducted a series of five multiple regression analyses that modeled the impact of selected Veteran and program characteristics on the duration of the

housing process. The dependent variables for the five models were measured as the continuous number of days in the following time periods:

- (1) Between program admission and referral to the housing authority
- (2) Between referral to the housing authority and Veteran's receipt of the HUD-VASH voucher
- (3) Between receipt of the voucher and Veteran moving into housing
- (4) Between program admission and receipt of voucher
- (5) Between program admission and moving into housing

For models 1, 2, and 4, the sample included all HUD-VASH participants. Models 3 and 5 included only HUD-VASH participants who moved into housing (i.e., stayers or leased-up exiters).

Each of the initial models included the following independent variables: study site, study group, age, sex, race, service-connected disability, whether the Veteran entered HUD-VASH before or after the transition to a Housing First approach, any medical condition, PTSD, depression, psychoses, schizophrenia, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, history of suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury, as well as monthly case management contacts during the time period of interest and outpatient and inpatient services utilization 90 days prior to and post entry.

Only control variables (study site, sex, age, race, and service-connected disability) and statistically significant independent variables identified through a backward selection model were retained in the final models, as indicated in Exhibit 5.2.

Logistic Regressions Modeling Exits from HUD-VASH (Exhibit 8.2)

To determine characteristics that may predict whether a Veteran exits HUD-VASH, the research team modeled logistic regressions for two dichotomous dependent variables:

- (1) Whether a Veteran who moved into HUD-VASH housing later exited the program (leased-up exiter = 1, stayer = 0)
- (2) Whether the Veteran exited the program prior to leasing a housing unit (non-leased exiter = 1, leased-up exiter = 0)

For the first model, the sample included HUD-VASH participants who moved into housing (i.e., stayers and leased-up exiters only); the sample for the second model included HUD-VASH participants who exited the program (i.e., leased-up exiters and non-leased exiters).

Each of the initial models included the following independent variables: study site, sex, age, race, service-connected disability, whether the Veteran entered HUD-VASH before or after the transition to a Housing First approach, any medical condition, PTSD, depression, psychoses, schizophrenia, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, and history of suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury.

Only control variables (sex, age, race, and service-connected disability) and statistically significant independent variables were retained in the final models, as indicated in Exhibit 8.2.

Latent Class Analysis Identifying Profiles of Leased-Up and Non-Leased Exiters (Exhibits 8.10–8.13)

To identify characteristics of Veterans who exited HUD-VASH, the research team conducted two latent class analyses (LCA): one for leased-up exiters and another for non-leased exiters. This analysis identifies unobserved subgroups (latent classes) within a population based on observed data (McCutcheon, 1987). The use of LCA allowed us to classify and describe subgroups of Veterans who exited HUD-VASH in an effort to characterize their exits.

The analyses included the following measures as manifest variables:

- Study site
- Sex
- Age
- Race
- VA enrollment priority group
- Medical conditions—dichotomized to indicate any medical condition
- Mental/behavioral health conditions—dichotomized to indicate any mental/behavioral health condition
- Substance use condition—dichotomized to indicate any substance use condition
- Medical services—dichotomized to indicate whether the Veteran had an inpatient stay for medical reasons during the 90 days prior to exit
- Reason for exit—collapsed similar categories for a total of seven

Using the poLCA package (Linzer & Lewis, 2011), the research team estimated a series of LCA models, specifying 1–10 classes. The model for each study group with the lowest Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) was selected as the best fitting model.

Cox proportional hazards survival analysis for time to return to homelessness within 360 days (Exhibit 8.15)

To assess the time between exiting HUD-VASH and returning to homelessness and to identify characteristics that increase the hazard of a Veteran returning to homelessness after exiting HUD-VASH, the research team conducted a Cox proportional hazards survival analysis. The dependent variable was whether HUD-VASH participants who exited the program returned to a VHA Homeless Program within 360 days of their exit.

The sample included all HUD-VASH participants who exited the program (i.e., leased-up exiters and non-leased exiters).

The initial model included the following independent variables: study site, sex, age, race, service-connected disability, any medical condition, PTSD, depression, psychoses, schizophrenia, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, and history of suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury.

Only control variables (sex, age, race, and service-connected disability) and statistically significant independent variables were retained in the final model, as indicated in Exhibit 8.15.

QUALITATIVE CODING DICTIONARY

Node Name	Description
Barriers and negative experiences	Barriers Veterans faced while participating in HUD-VASH; includes: barriers to enrollment in the program, barriers to getting housed, barriers to staying in the program Examples: program requirements, economic barriers, relationships with family, relationships with program staff, relationships with landlords, drug & alcohol use history/relapse, etc. Also includes instances where veterans had to do things for themselves because of lack of support. Include negative experiences
Difficulties with rules & regulations	Difficulties with the rules & regulations when accessing the program
Landlord problems	Problems with their landlord/property management office
Need for additional support	Barriers associated with needing additional support
Neighborhood or housing barriers	Barriers associated with a specific neighborhood or any other housing barriers
Other problems	General barriers or negative experience associated with accessing the HUD-VASH program
Processing problems	Problems with being processed or any other paperwork related barriers to entering into the program
Staff or other personnel difficulties	Difficulties with interacting with staff or other personnel
Discrimination	Experiences with discrimination Examples: gender and race discrimination
Background issues	Discrimination due to background; could relate to having an arrest record or other perceived issues such as being a Veteran or being homeless
Disability	Discrimination due to having a disability
Other discrimination	Other types of discrimination
Voucher	Discrimination due to having a HUD-VASH voucher
Exposure to program and referral source	How Veterans learned about HUD-VASH or the referral source for getting into the program Examples: learned from peers/program staff/a brochure, learned from participating in a program, name of referral source
Doctors or other medical personnel	Physicians or other medical personnel are the source of exposure or referral to HUD-VASH
Family or friends	Source of exposure/referral is a family member or friend
Other or cannot recall	Referral/exposure source to HUD-VASH isn't similar enough to others or in which Veteran cannot recall or isn't clear about how s/he learned about the program
Other Rehab, shelters, or other programs	Learned about HUD-VASH through rehab program, shelter or another formal program through which they were receiving some kind of support; may include personnel (such as case managers/social workers) working for those programs—should not be coded to VA rehab, shelter, or mental health program
Other Veterans	Other Veterans are the source of exposure or referral to the HUD-VASH program
VA	Learned about the HUD-VASH program through another VA program, through information pamphlets or information sessions provided by VA, or through case managers/social workers or VA personnel other than physicians or medical personnel

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Facilitation	Anything associated with using program support and receiving social support—must be a specific instance; includes self-facilitation/self-motivation Examples: using services such as peer support, employment support, moving support, paperwork support, linking to other resources, other support such as training or meetings and education or work related support after leaving the program
Promoting Veteran independence	Facilitation that promoted Veteran independence
Reestablishing rental and credit history	Facilitation aspects helped with re-establishing rental, credit history or other means of economic assistance
Self sufficiency	Facilitation as it relates to being self-sufficient
Support services	Participating in various programs
Educational programs	Participation in educational programs
Employment assistance	Participation in employment assistance programs
Financial assistance	Participation in financial assistance programs
Food assistance	Participation in food assistance programs
Furniture and household items support	Participation in furniture and household programs
Other support	Participation in other general support programs
Peer counseling help	Participation in peer counseling programs
Program and meeting support	Participation in program and meeting support
Self-support	Veteran provided support to themselves
Family and friends influence	References to family or friends as influential during HUD-VASH housing experience—both positive and negative
Background or context for Housing	Reference family in order to tell a personal story that impacted their housing circumstances or their ability to get housing
Difficult relationships with family or friends	Difficult relationships with family or friends
Family or Friends help with housing search or move in	Assistance from family or friends during housing search or move-in
General reference to family or friends	General references about family or friends
Place to stay with family or friends	Staying with family or friends
Homelessness status	Homelessness status and most recent housing situation prior to entering HUD-VASH Examples: being required to qualify in the "chronic homelessness" definition in order to obtain housing, living in a shelter, staying with family or friends
Family member, spouse, ex-spouse	Respondent living with a family member, spouse, or ex-spouse before HUD-VASH
Friend or acquaintance	Respondent living with a friend or acquaintance before HUD-VASH
Car, RV, trailer, etc.	Respondent living in a car, RV, or other conveyance
Storage unit, camp, bus station	Respondent living in a storage unit, camp, bus station, or unstable/informal housing

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Street	Respondent described him/herself as living "on the street" prior to enrollment in HUD-VASH
Rented room	Respondent staying in a hotel or motel room or other short-term rented room
VA program or shelter	Respondent living in a VA associated shelter or in another VA program that provided some kind of housing
Other program or shelter	Respondent living in a non-VA associated program or shelter
Post HUD-VASH	Respondent discusses their housing status after leaving the HUD-VASH program
Prison or detention center	Respondent incarcerated prior to applying for HUD-VASH
VA Hospital	Respondent in the hospital for an extended period prior to applying for HUD-VASH
House hunting experience	Experience searching for housing—both positive and negative; include the process steps throughout the experience and housing qualifications Examples: whether the HUD-VASH housing list was made available, whether making appointments to see houses was easy or difficult, whether searching for houses in different geographic areas was easy or difficult, whether there were challenges with the move-in requirements, avoiding undesirable neighborhoods
Facilitation	Positive house hunting experiences
Good relationship with landlord	House hunting facilitation related to their relationship with their landlord
Housing deposit help	House hunting facilitation related to their housing deposit
List of apartments as helpful	House hunting facilitation related to apartment listings
Move in help	House hunting facilitation related to move-in
No problems with rules and requirements	House hunting facilitation related to the rules and regulation requirements
Other resources for housing search	Other facilitators to housing search
Quick move in	House hunting facilitation related to a quick move-in experience
Saved up money	House hunting facilitation related to Veteran savings
Supportive or advocative case manager	Code here when respondents discuss house hunting facilitation related to their relationship with their case manager
Transportation help	House hunting facilitation related to transportation
Barriers	Negative house hunting experiences
Accessible housing for disabled	House hunting barriers related to disability access
Bad credit	House hunting barriers related to bad credit
Bad neighborhood - High crime or drug infested	House hunting barriers related to undesirable neighborhoods
Conflicts with landlord or apartment management	House hunting barriers related to landlord or property management conflicts
Difficulty navigating listing	House hunting barriers related to the housing list provided by the VA case manager or other HUD-VASH program personnel
Discrimination by appearance	House hunting barriers related to discrimination due to Veteran appearance

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Health history, substance use	House hunting barriers related to health or substance use
High rent	House hunting barriers related to unaffordable rent
Incarceration history	House hunting barriers related to Veteran incarceration history
Inspection issues	House hunting barriers related to getting unit inspected
Lack of resources	House hunting barriers related to having a lack of resources
limited funds for deposit	House hunting barriers related to having limited funds for the security deposit
Limited housing	House hunting barriers related to the limited housing options available to Veteran
Little to no support from VASH case manager	House hunting barriers related to having limited or no support from VA case manager
Long time for process	House hunting barriers related to it taking a long time to enroll in program/process paperwork
Problems with requirements	House hunting barriers related to having difficulty with the program requirements
Short time frame for apartment search	House hunting barriers related to having a short time frame for the apartment search
Transportation	House hunting barriers related to accessing transportation
Unsuitable housing	House hunting barriers related to unsuitable housing
Other	General house hunting experiences
General commentary on process or steps	General process steps related to Veteran house hunting experiences
Housing satisfaction	Details related to housing satisfaction
Amenities	Housing satisfaction related to amenities
General satisfaction	General housing satisfaction
Location	Housing satisfaction related to location
Price	Housing satisfaction related to pricing
HUD VASH return to program	Details on whether leased-up and non-leased exiters would return to HUD-VASH
No	Exiter would NOT return to HUD-VASH
Yes, if qualify and or needed	Exiter would return to the HUD-VASH if they qualified or needed the service
Yes, with conditions	Exiter would return to the HUD-VASH program with conditions
Initial enrollment process	Experience with enrolling in the program Examples: length of enrollment process, satisfaction with the turnaround time
Can't recall the process	Veteran could not recall the enrollment process
Description of enrollment steps	Descriptions of the enrollment process—neither positive or negative
Bringing documentation	Bringing in documentation as part of the enrollment process
Drug testing	Drug tests as part of the enrollment process
Filling out paperwork	Filling out paperwork during enrollment process
Meeting with case manager	One-on-one meeting with VA case manager as part of the enrollment process
Orientation	Orientation as described as part of the enrollment process
Receipt of voucher	Receipt of voucher as final step of enrollment

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Screening	Screening interviews as part of enrollment process
TB test, vaccinations, other preventative medicine	Preventive medicine as part of the enrollment process
Documentation required	Descriptions of the required documentation that participants had to bring to enroll
Enrollment took less time or as long as expected	Enrollment (from initial paperwork to voucher) took as long or less time than expected
Higher need	Veteran's homelessness status (multiple instances of homelessness, high risk, etc.) led to an expediting of their enrollment
Involved in other program	Involvement in another program to assist the homeless (e.g., VA domiciliary, HPRP, shelter, or rehab program) may have played a role in the speed in which Veteran enrolled in HUD-VASH
Misinformation	Veteran was led to believe the enrollment process would take longer than it did
Mistaken assumptions	Enrollment process took less time than expected because Veteran simply assumed that it would take longer due to bureaucracy, assumed waiting lists, etc.
Timeframe didn't matter	Veteran didn't feel the enrollment process took a long time because their situation didn't require enrollment to happen quickly
VA case manager or social worker fast tracked the enrolment	Enrollment took less time than expected because someone fast-tracked the Veteran
Vouchers were available	Enrollment was quick because vouchers were readily available.
Vouchers weren't available	Veteran satisfied with the timeframe or in which the timeframe was shorter than expected because they knew that there weren't enough vouchers to go around
Enrollment took longer than expected	Enrollment took longer than expected
Could not get information	Enrollment took longer than expected because Veteran couldn't get accurate information about the process (couldn't reach someone by phone, wasn't provided the information initially, etc.)
Had to reapply	Enrollment took longer than expected because Veteran had to apply a second time after being rejected or losing the voucher
Homelessness status or impending homelessness	Shelter or other programs have a time limit and thus make it seem like the voucher is taking longer than it should or generally where the individual's homelessness status makes waiting seem more difficult
Involvement with another program	Instances in which involvement with another VA or separate assistance program (CWT, rehab) slows down the process
Misinformation	Process took longer than expected because Veteran given misinformation about the timeframe
No case manager assigned	VA case manager was not assigned to Veteran, resulting in enrollment taking longer than expected
VA case worker sat on paperwork	Enrollment took a long time due to inaction on the part of a VA case worker
Waiting list	Veteran placed on a waiting list to receive a voucher due to a lack of vouchers, resources, or program closure
Enrollment was difficult	Difficulty enrolling in HUD-VASH
A lot of steps	Difficulty with enrollment was simply a lot of steps to enrollment

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Gathering documents	Enrollment was difficult because it was hard to gather documents
Initial Rejection	Veteran initially rejected
Lack of assistance	Lack of assistance or helpful information led to the enrollment process being difficult
Negotiating between different parties	Negotiating between all the parties involved made enrollment difficult
Other veterans irritate VASH staff	HUD-VASH staff described as rude and the respondent attributes it to the behavior of other veterans
Paperwork was lost	Enrollment process was difficult because HUD-VASH lost the Veteran's paperwork
Personal issues	Personal issues such as family problems, substance abuse, mental illness, etc., made enrollment difficult
Program qualifications were complicated	Enrollment was difficult due to the program's qualifications, such as involvement in a drug rehab program or the locations for finding housing were limited and confusing
Traveling to VASH or PHA offices was difficult	Enrollment was difficult due to problems with travel
Waiting	Waiting for approval, vouchers, etc., was considered a difficulty to enrollment
Enrollment was easy	Enrollment in HUD-VASH was easy
Facilitation by VA case manager or staff	Ease of enrollment is attributed to assistance by a VA case manager or other HUD-VASH staff
Group orientation	Group orientation made enrollment easier
Necessary documents were readily available	Ease of enrollment is attributed to necessary documents being readily available
Support from doctors	Enrollment was assisted by a physician, therapist, or other health worker
Support from staff	Staff support (including providing good information about what steps to take) made enrollment easy
Length of time	Descriptions of how long initial enrollment took
Long-term housing plans and goals	Long-term living arrangement and plans; includes any housing post-exit/current living situation of exiters—do NOT include if Veteran is homeless Examples: future plans to stay in the program, plan to own a house after leaving HUD-VASH, plan to change neighborhoods
No housing recovery plan	Veteran did not make a housing recovery plan
Yes had a housing recovery plan	Discussion having a housing recovery plan
Educational goal	Educational goals included in housing recovery plan
Homeownership goal	Home ownership goal in housing recovery plan
Other goals	Other general goals in housing recovery plan
Sobriety goals	Sobriety goal in housing recovery plan
Work goals	Work or occupational goal in housing recovery plan
Unsure or unclear of housing recovery plan	Veteran unsure/unclear of housing recovery plan

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Orientation quality	Program orientation provided by either HUD or VA Examples: whether Veteran received orientation, who provided the orientation, positive or negative responses to orientation quality
Attitudes about orientation	General attitude about orientation
Dissatisfaction with information provided	Dissatisfaction with the amount or quality of information provided in the orientation
Information was adequately explained	Orientation provided the necessary information for participation in HUD-VASH
Information wasn't very useful	Orientation provided information that was not useful for participation in HUD-VASH
Overall negative	Overall negative feeling about the orientation, but no specifics Examples: it was not helpful; it was bad; I did not like the orientation
Overall positive	Overall positive feeling about the orientation, but no specifics- Examples: it was helpful; it was good; I liked the orientation
Personal difficulties	Personal difficulties caused difficulties with the orientation, not the quality of the orientation itself
Self-efficacy	Veteran's tendency to ask for additional help or information or to listen well and take notes contributed to the quality of the information provided in the orientation
Can't recall orientation	Veteran cannot recall having attended an orientation for the program
Filled out paperwork	Paperwork was filled out over the course of the orientation
Host organization	Orientation host
HUD-VASH orientation by both PHA and VA	Orientation was a joint presentation from both the local housing authority and VA
HUD-VASH orientation	Orientation was presented by VA
Orientation given by VA case manager	Orientation was provided during a one-on-one meeting with VA case manager
PHA Orientation	Instances in which the orientation is being presented by the local public housing authority
Informational materials	Descriptions of informational materials (usually the format)
Information presented	Information presented at orientation
Explained guidelines	Program guidelines explained during orientation Examples: descriptions of the locations Veterans allowed to live, rules and regulations for apartments under Section 8, rules about drug-free living
Housing tips	Housing tips provided during the orientation
Program overview	Veteran recalls orientation as simply an overview of HUD-VASH, rather than specifics
Program steps	Specific information about steps to the program going forward
Tips for living	Information about how to budget, get help paying bills, etc.
No orientation	Veteran doesn't remember attending or being provided any orientation to the HUD-VASH program
Shared experience	Other Veterans with similar experiences at the orientation as a positive experience

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Patterns of exiting program	Reason for leaving HUD-VASH Examples: financial/income conditions, health issues, drug use concerns, finding alternative options for housing, being evicted, graduating from the program
Leased exiters	Reasons for leased-up exiters leaving the program
Bought a house or ready to find own place	Exit due to a change in housing situation Examples: Veteran bought a house, ready to move on
Evicted due to active addiction	Exit due to active addiction
Moved to take care of family	Exit to take care of family
Multiple reasons for leaving	Multiple reasons for leaving the program
Other reason for exiting	Other general reasons for leaving the program Example: legally gave voucher to wife
Unable to pay rent	Exit due to unaffordable rent
Voucher revoked/did not qualify	Exit due to making too much money or missing the recertification deadline
Non-leased exiters	Reasons for non-leased exiters leaving the program
Chose alternative program or option	Exit due to choosing alternative programs or housing options
Did not qualify	Exit due to not qualifying
Multiple reasons	Multiple reasons for leaving the program
No longer needed housing	Exit due to no longer needing housing. Example: inherited property
Not chronically homeless	Veteran not considered chronically homeless. (will likely be combined with did not qualify)
Other reason	Other reasons for leaving the program.
Unable to afford rent	Exit because Veteran could not afford rent
Unable to live alone	Exit because Veteran no longer able to live alone Example: entered nursing home
Voucher revoked	Voucher revoked Examples: unable to find place in time, active addiction, incarceration, searched in wrong county, lost information necessary for voucher
Stayer with story about exiting from previous place	Stayer shares story about prior program exit
Personal history	Veterans personal history Examples: sharing information on immigration history, family background, reasons for becoming homeless, experiencing illness, disability, or other health related issues, past physical, psychological, or sexual trauma, military discharge experience and transition back into society, incarceration experiences
Addiction Relapse Recovery	Personal stories about addiction, relapse or recovery
Arrest Record	Personal stories about arrest record
Family Concerns	Personal stories about family

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Financial Issues	Personal stories about financial difficulties
Health Problems & or Disability	Personal stories about health problems or disability
Other Personal History	Other personal stories
Physical Sexual Trauma	Personal stories about physical or sexual trauma
PTSD or Mental Health Concerns or Self Harm	Personal stories about PTSD, mental health concerns, or self-harm
Positive experiences	Positive experiences during participation in HUD-VASH
Interactions with staff and personnel	Positive experiences with staff and personnel
Optimism	Emotional optimism
Overall good experience	General positive experiences
Program help	Positive experiences getting program help
Program qualifications	Information on qualifying criteria for program and/or whether Veterans qualified Examples: taking a urinalysis as a part of the qualification criteria, receiving program qualification information
Additional requirements	Miscellaneous or vague requirements that do not fit other categories
Attitudes toward qualifications	Attitudes towards program qualifications
Can't recall requirements	Veteran isn't aware of, or isn't very familiar with, HUD-VASH rules or requirements
Concern about or problems with requirements	Veteran expresses concern about, or specific problems with, following rules or keeping up with the requirements of the program
Consequences	Consequences for not meeting HUD-VASH requirements
No problem with rules or qualifications	Rules or qualifications of the program were not an issue
Background or medical	Program qualifications related to background or medical checks
Disability qualifications or VA connection	Veteran told that s/he needed to have a certain percentage service-connected disability
Legal requirements	Rules regarding legal trouble
Medical qualifications	TB tests, vaccinations, etc.
Case management	VA case management requirements
Case management	Rules about keeping up with VA case management, such as having to meet with the case manager, home visits, etc.
Class or group therapy attendance	Required attendance at group therapy sessions or specific classes (such as on budgeting or other life skills) in order to maintain housing
Income requirement	Income requirements, including minimums and maximums
Pre-housing requirements	Pre-housing requirements to qualify for program
Background or credit checks	Specific requirements of landlords such as background checks, credit checks, or application fees
Housing qualifications	Particular qualifications for housing
Location or region rules	Rules about border/particular boundaries Examples: specific county lines, specific cities

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Orientation attendance	Requirements around attending orientation
Severity of homelessness	Severity of homelessness considered a qualification for the program (or possibly for determining Veteran priority)
Time to use voucher	Time period given to use the voucher
Renter rules and Inspection	Renter rules and inspection requirements
Continued occupancy requirement	Rules regarding how long one can be away from the apartment
Financial or renter rules	Qualifications centered on financial issues or keeping up basic lessee contractual obligations
Inspection and recertification	Rules for having an apartment inspected or recertified
Requirements have changed	Veteran indicates that HUD-VASH requirements have changed over time
Sobriety	Sobriety requirements for staying in HUD-VASH
Recommendations	Veteran recommendations on how to improve HUD-VASH program
Additional assistance	Recommendations about financial or informational assistance; includes programs for those with special needs or complex background issues
Additional locations	Recommendations about the availability of additional locations for housing
No recommendations	No recommendations about the HUD VASH housing program
Other recommendations	General recommendations for the HUD-VASH program
Outreach and communication	Improve outreach and communication about the program
Process improvements	Ways to improve the process Examples: improvements to paperwork, communication about requirements, options for unique requirements
Qualification changes	Recommendations about qualification requirements
Quality housing	Recommendations about improving neighborhood choices
Staffing Improvements	Recommendations about staffing improvements Examples: consistency, respect for clients, sensitivity to background issues
Relationships with case managers (housing authority and VA)	References to relationships with VA case manager, other VA staff or staff from public housing authority—both positive and negative Examples: whether VA case manager was accessible, helpful, knowledgeable, communicative, compassionate
Facilitation	Facilitation related to relationships with case managers
Access to resources	Access to resources as a facilitator to their relationship with case manager
Helped orient to program (Individualized service)	Program orientation as a facilitator to their relationship with case manager
Highly supportive and helpful	Supportive and helpful case manager
Importance of accessing manager	Importance of accessing case manager
Peer support as beneficial	VA peer support as a program facilitator

Appendix C: Methods

Node Name	Description
Serving as advocates for veterans	VA case manager as advocate for Veteran
Veteran accountability	Veteran accountability as program facilitator
Barriers	Barriers related to relationship with case managers
High turnover	High staff turnover as a barrier to relationship with case manager
Impersonal or non-empathetic interactions	Impersonal or non-empathetic case managers
Irregular meetings	Irregular meetings with case manager
Non-responsiveness	Non responsive case manager
Unmet expectations	Barriers related to unmet expectations
Veteran readiness	Veteran describes readiness to access services as barrier to participation
Transportation	References to transportation—both positive and negative
Facilitation	Facilitators related to transportation
Living in area convenient to transportation	Veteran lives in an area convenient to transportation
Other positive transportation experiences	Other positive experiences related to transportation
Transportation available for housing search and moving in	Transportation is accessible Examples: own car, VA case manager/staff's transport to conduct housing search or move-in
Barriers	Barriers related to transportation
Housing search and moving in limiting due to lack of transportation	Transportation as a barrier to housing search or move in process
In need of a car or transportation to get around	Lack of vehicle impedes on housing experience
Living in area inconvenient to public transportation	Lack of public transportation
Other negative transportation experience	Other negative experiences around transportation
Remain in certain geographic areas due to lack of transportation	Veteran remains in a geographic location due to lack of transportation

APPENDIX D: STUDY RESPONDENTS

A subsample of 508 HUD-VASH participants responded to in-person or telephone surveys. This appendix provides information about the subsample of study respondents as well as the representativeness of the subsample to the larger population of HUD-VASH participants.

STUDY RESPONDENT SUBSAMPLE

Exhibit D.1 summarizes the respondent sample size by study site and group.

Exhibit D.1 Study respondent count

	Stayers (N=370)		Leased-Up Exiters (N=80)		Nonleased Exiters N=58		Total N=508			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Houston	92	24.9	8	10.0	5	8.6	105	20.7		
Los Angeles	95	25.7	25	31.3	16	27.6	136	26.8		
Palo Alto	86	23.2	24	30.0	22	37.9	132	26.0		
Philadelphia	97	26.2	23	28.8	15	25.9	135	26.6		
	Houston N=105		Los Angeles N=136		Palo Alto N=132		Philadelphia N=135		Total N=508	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Stayers	92	87.6	95	69.9	86	65.2	97	71.9	370	72.8
Leased-up exiters	8	7.6	25	18.4	24	18.2	23	17.0	80	15.7
Nonleased exiters	5	4.8	16	11.8	22	16.7	15	11.1	58	11.4

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

The program admission year for study respondents is listed in Exhibit D.2.

Exhibit D.2 Year of program admission, study respondents

	Stayers N=365		Leased-Up Exiters N=80		Nonleased Exiters N=54	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
2008 or before	21	5.8	1	1.3	0	0.0
2009	80	21.9	11	13.8	0	0.0
2010	133	36.4	15	18.8	0	0.0
2011	106	29.0	27	33.8	3	5.6
2012	22	6.0	9	11.3	21	38.9
2013	3	0.8	8	10.0	26	48.1
2014	0	0.0	9	11.3	4	7.4

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Exhibit D.3 lists study respondents' mean length of stay in HUD-VASH. On average, stayers were housed through HUD-VASH for nearly four years (1,455 days); leased-up exiters remained

in housing for about two years (734 days) before exiting; and nonleased exiters left the program after about four months (122 days).

Exhibit D.3 Days in HUD-VASH, by quartile, study respondents

	N	25%	50%	75%	Mean
Stayers					
Voucher issuance to end of observation period	363	1,309	1,526	1,754	1,535
Move-in to end of observation period	363	1,219	1,448	1,698	1,455
Leased-up exiters					
Voucher issuance to exit	66	459	749	1,141	797
Move-in to exit	65	381	688	1,069	734
Nonleased exiters					
Voucher issuance to exit	31	81	127	153	122

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Exhibit D.4 provides data on the number of study respondents that remained housed through HUD-VASH for at least one or two years. The majority of all respondents housed through HUD-VASH remained in housing for two years or more. Among leased-up exiters, over one-half stayed in housing for at least one year, and one-third remained for at least two years.

Exhibit D.4 Years in HUD-VASH housing, study respondents

	All Study Respondents N=450		Leased-Up Exiters Only N=80	
	N	%	N	%
1 year or longer	414	92.0	52	65.0
2 years or longer	386	85.8	29	36.3

HUD-VASH = U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

DEMOGRAPHICS

The subsample of participants responding to a survey, labeled here study respondents, was also overwhelmingly male (86.8 percent of stayers, 91.3 percent of leased-up exiters, and 87.3 percent of nonleased exiters; N=500). As with study participants, nonleased exiter respondents were younger, on average, than both stayers and leased-up exiters. (See Exhibit D.5.)

Exhibit D.5 Age, study respondents

	Stayers N=365		Leased-Up Exiters N=80		Nonleased Exiters N=55	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<35	16	4.4	0	0.0	10	18.2
35-44	33	9.0	9	11.3	6	10.9
45-54	170	46.6	34	42.5	20	36.4
55-64	122	33.4	32	40.0	16	29.1
≥65	24	6.6	5	6.3	3	5.5

Source: VA Medical Record

The majority of study respondents identified as black; however, nonleased exiter respondents were more likely to identify as white compared with the other study groups. While the majority of study respondents identified as non-Hispanic, nonleased exiter respondents were more likely to be Hispanic. (See Exhibit D.6.)

Exhibit D.6 Race and ethnicity, study respondents

	Stayers N=361		Leased-Up Exiters N=77		Nonleased Exiters N=55	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Race						
Black or African American	239	66.2	52	67.5	30	54.5
White	104	28.8	22	28.6	24	43.6
Other	18	5.0	3	3.9	1	1.8
Ethnicity						
	N=363		N=80		N=55	
Hispanic/Latino	31	8.5	7	8.8	8	14.5
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	326	89.8	72	90.0	46	83.6
Multiple	6	1.7	1	1.3	1	1.8

Source: VA Medical Record

Among study respondents, stayers and leased-up exiters were slightly more likely to have never been married or be divorced; nonleased exiters were more likely to be married and less likely to be divorced. (See Exhibit D.7.)

Exhibit D.7 Marital status, study respondents

	Stayers N=364		Leased-Up Exiters N=79		Nonleased Exiters N=55	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	35	9.6	8	10.1	12	21.8
Widowed	12	3.3	0	0.0	3	5.5
Separated	33	9.1	6	7.6	7	12.7
Divorced	140	38.5	35	44.3	14	25.5
Never married	144	39.6	30	38.0	19	34.5

Source: VA Medical Record

Stayers were less likely than the other study groups to be receiving compensation for a service-connected disability (45.7 percent of stayers vs. 57.6 percent of leased-up and 47.3 percent of nonleased exiters). Leased-up exiter respondents were the most likely to be receiving compensation for a service-connected disability of 50 percent or more, while stayers and nonleased exiters were more evenly distributed among the service-connected disability groups. (See Exhibit D.8.)

Exhibit D.8 VA enrollment priority group, study respondents

	Stayers N=365		Leased-Up Exiters N=80		Nonleased Exiters N=55	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
≥50% service-connected disability	74	20.3	31	38.8	11	20.0
<50% service-connected disability	92	25.2	15	18.8	15	27.3
No service-connected disability; Medicaid-eligible	185	50.7	27	33.8	27	49.1
No service-connected disability; Not Medicaid-eligible	14	3.8	7	8.8	2	3.6
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Source: VA Medical Record

MILITARY HISTORY

The majority of study respondents served during the Vietnam and post-Vietnam eras. Leased-up exiter respondents were more likely to have served in the post-Vietnam era and less likely to have served in the Persian Gulf War; nonleased exiters were more likely to have served in more recent conflicts. (See Exhibit D.9.)

Exhibit D.9 Period of service and combat exposure, study respondents

	Stayers N=365		Leased-Up Exiters N=80		Nonleased Exiters N=55	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Period of service						
World War II	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Korean War	6	1.6	0	0.0	1	1.8
Vietnam Era	153	41.9	34	42.5	12	21.8
Post-Vietnam	134	36.7	32	40.0	19	34.5
Persian Gulf War	65	17.8	11	13.8	22	40.0
Other	7	1.9	3	3.8	1	1.8
Combat exposure						
OEF/OIF deployment	15	4.1	2	2.5	7	12.7
Combat exposure	16	4.4	3	3.8	0	0.0

Source: VA Medical Record

MEDICAL AND MENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Roughly 30 percent or more of study respondents had any of the 25 medical conditions assessed for this study; leased-up exiters had the highest rate and were most likely to have any mental/behavioral health diagnosis, followed by nonleased exiters. Compared with nonleased exiters, leased-up exiter respondents had higher rates of depression and alcohol and drug abuse, while nonleased exiter respondents had higher rates of PTSD, psychoses, schizophrenia, and suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury. (See Exhibit D.10.)

Exhibit D.10 Medical and mental/behavioral health conditions, study respondents

	Stayers N=365		Leased-Up Exiter N=80s		Nonleased Exiters N=55	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Medical conditions						
Any medical condition	109	29.9	28	35.0	18	32.7
Most prevalent medical conditions						
Hypertension	56	15.3	17	21.3	12	21.8
Diabetes, uncomplicated	30	8.2	9	11.3	5	9.1
Chronic pulmonary disease	15	4.1	5	6.3	2	3.6
Obesity	17	4.7	2	2.5	2	3.6
Traumatic brain injury	0	0.0	1	1.3	0	0.0
Mental/behavioral health conditions						
Any mental/behavioral health condition	142	38.9	44	55.0	24	43.6
Post-traumatic stress disorder	21	5.8	13	16.3	11	20.0
Depression	39	10.7	19	23.8	7	12.7
Psychoses	52	14.2	18	22.5	13	23.6
Schizophrenia	27	7.4	14	17.5	10	18.2
Alcohol abuse	81	22.2	27	33.8	13	23.6
Drug abuse	100	27.4	33	41.3	17	30.9
Suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury	25	6.8	3	3.8	6	10.9

Source: VA Medical Record

REPRESENTATIVENESS OF STUDY RESPONDENT SUBSAMPLE

To assess whether the respondent sample was representative of HUD-VASH participants at the study sites, the research team compared the Veterans who did and did not respond to the primary interviews on a number of demographic variables as well as medical and mental/behavioral health conditions. Given the large sample size and the possibility of statistically significant differences that are not substantively meaningful, the research team applied a Bonferroni adjustment to determine the level of significance necessary to assess the representativeness of the respondent sample and applied a conservative alpha level of 0.001.

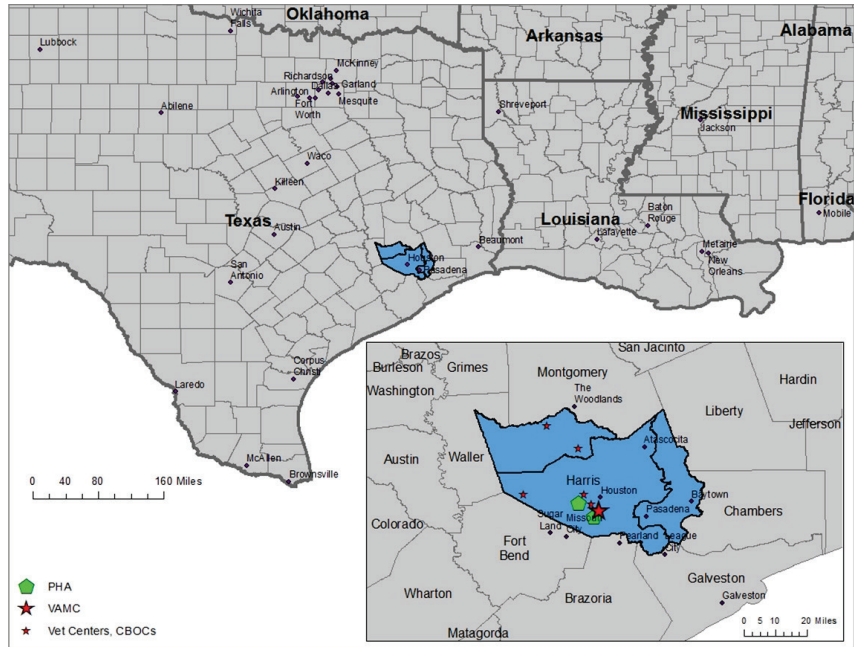
The study respondents were representative of HUD-VASH participants at the study sites based on gender; ethnicity; marital status; VA enrollment priority group; period of military service; experience of combat; the presence of any medical conditions and, specifically, hypertension, chronic pulmonary disease, obesity, and traumatic brain injury (TBI); any mental/behavioral health condition and, specifically, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, psychoses, schizophrenia, and suicide. The study respondents were not representative of the larger sample of program participants on the following characteristics:

- Age—Respondents were slightly younger
- Race—Respondents were more likely to identify as black or African American
- Diabetes—Respondents had a higher rate of diabetes
- Substance use disorders—Respondents had higher rates of both alcohol and drug use
- Year of program entry—Respondents were more likely to have entered the program earlier, which was expected given recruitment methods

Given that primary data collected from study respondents were used largely to provide subjective, contextual information and that the differences between the two groups were minimal and not related to the primary findings of this study, we do not think that these differences have any implications for the interpretation of the analyses presented in this study.

APPENDIX E: HOUSTON SITE DESCRIPTION

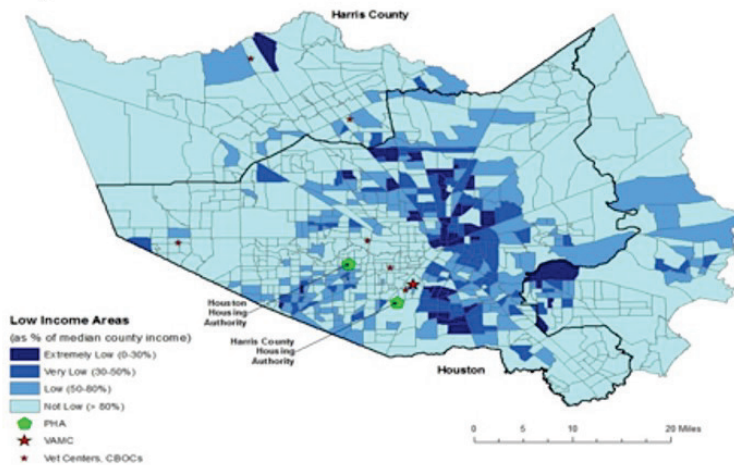
The Houston HUD-VASH program operates in Harris, Galveston, and Jefferson counties. The coordinating VA site is the Michael E. DeBakey VAMC in Houston, TX. The HUD-VASH program has 1,695 vouchers. The majority of vouchers are held by the Houston Housing Authority (HHA, 1,042) and Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA, 546). HHA can serve Veterans within the City of Houston, as well as up to five miles outside of the city limits. HCHA can serve Veterans anywhere within the county.



HOUSING CONTEXT

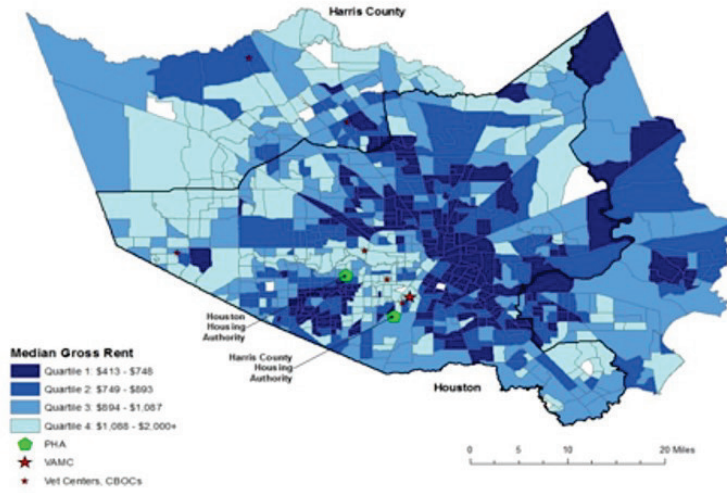
The following maps provide context for the housing markets in which Veterans participating in the Houston HUD-VASH program conducted their housing search.

Map 1 Low income areas, Houston



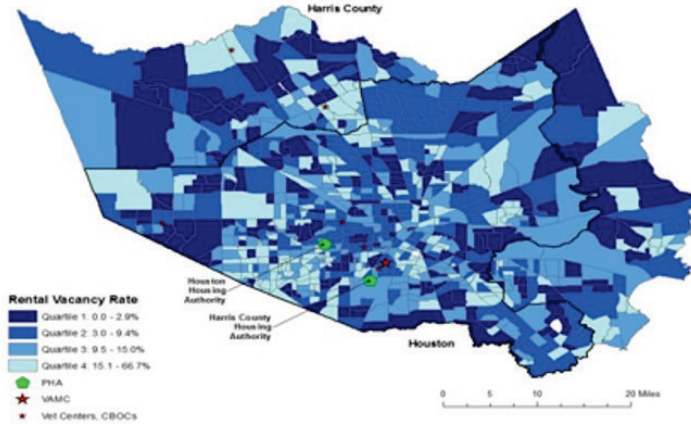
Map 1 outlines low, very low, and extremely low income areas based on median county income. Lower income areas, which are shaded darker, are closer to the center of the City of Houston and there are very few low income areas in Harris County. The VAMC, other Vet Centers, and CBOCs, as well as HCHA and HHA, are located in areas that are not low income, indicating that Veterans in HUD-VASH likely have to travel to access VA services and meet with housing authority staff.

Map 2 Median gross rent, Houston



Map 2 depicts median gross rent by quartile; the darkest areas have the lowest rent. The areas with the lowest median rent are often the same as those with the lowest incomes and are more densely located in the center of the City of Houston. While there are some low rent areas close to the HHA, the VAMC, Vet Centers, and CBOCs, as well as HCHA, are located in areas where Veterans in HUD-VASH will be unlikely to afford housing.

Map 3 Rental vacancy rate, Houston



Map 3 provides details on the rental vacancy rate by quartile; areas with lower vacancy rates are shaded darker. This map indicates that the housing market is generally tighter in Harris County than the City of Houston. Additionally, vacancy rates vary throughout the city, so it is likely that housing is available in most areas.

VA Case Management

The site has 69 VA staff serving Veterans, including three supervisors, 66 case managers, four peer support specialists, three SUD specialists (each with a case management load), two housing specialists (one specialist, one coordinator), three physicians, and one nurse. The program also partners with vocational rehabilitation to provide three employment specialists to assist HUD-VASH clients. The case load is 1:38. The case management staff comprises 11 teams at seven locations.

Team	Associated Housing Authority	Service Location	Team Composition
Blue	Houston Housing Authority	Houston VAMC	
Silver		Houston VAMC	
Green		Domiciliary	
Pearl		Houston Housing Authority	
Purple	Houston Housing Authority, Harris County Housing Authority	Travis Street	ACT Team
Red	Harris County Housing Authority	Harris County Housing Authority	ACT Team
Gold			
Aqua			
Galveston	Galveston Housing Authority	Galveston CBOC	1 person
Beaumont	Beaumont Housing Authority	Beaumont CBOC	1 person

OUTREACH

Three entities in Houston conduct outreach and screenings for all local VHA Homeless Programs: the Homeless Patient Aligned Care Team (HPACT) located at the VAMC, McGovern Drop-In Center located in the community, and the VA’s Community Resource & Referral Center. A number of community-based organizations—including Goodwill, Salvation Army, and US Vets—conduct outreach and recruit Veterans for the program. Outreach also takes place in prisons and jails.

REFERRALS AND ELIGIBILITY

Staff at each of the outreach/drop-in locations conduct an initial intake of 10–15 questions. This intake verifies the Veteran’s self-reported housing status and collects paperwork and identification required for the HUD-VASH application. Veterans must be chronically homeless to be eligible for and referred to HUD-VASH. The housing authority determines eligibility for the voucher based on the Veteran’s income and criminal background. During this initial referral period, Veterans are encouraged to provide required eligibility and enrollment documents, such as proof of identity and income.

TARGETING

The HUD-VASH program targets chronically homeless Veterans.

REFERRAL & ADMISSION

If the 10–15 question screen determines that the Veteran is eligible for HUD-VASH, staff completing the form forward this information and a standard intake assessment to the VA housing coordinator. The VA housing coordinator, who is responsible for processing referrals when there are available vouchers, assigns the Veteran to a housing authority and associated VA case management team and provides a referral to the VA team lead. The VA team lead then distributes the referrals among the VA case managers based on case load. The assigned VA case manager reviews the screening notes to ensure that the Veteran is eligible for HUD-VASH and then follows up with the Veteran to schedule a meeting to enroll in the program. VA case managers do not complete a second screening; however, if the Veteran has been housed since the initial screening since s/he may no longer qualify for the program.

VOUCHER APPLICATION

The VA case management team works with two housing authorities: HHA and HCHA. The housing authorities have worked together to create a shared HUD-VASH application to streamline the application process. Despite these efforts, however, each housing authority has a slightly different application process and required documents.

Both HHA and HCHA receive a list of referrals from the VA housing coordinator that includes Veterans' names, Social Security numbers, and dates of birth, allowing the housing authorities to complete the sex offender check and eligibility verifications in advance of meeting with the Veteran. Each housing authority has a unique voucher process:

- HHA—Briefings are scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:00 am. At that time, all paperwork for both the VA and housing authority is completed and Veterans receive their vouchers.
- HCHA—An initial meeting is scheduled with the HCHA case manager on Thursdays. The VA case manager typically meets with Veterans directly before this meeting to provide an overview of the program. The voucher briefing is scheduled for the following Thursday.

A Veteran is not considered to be admitted to HUD-VASH until s/he is assigned to a VA case management team and the voucher application is submitted to the housing authority.

HOUSING SEARCH

The Houston VA case management team indicates that it does not require VA case management during the housing process; however, the VA case manager is in regular contact with the Veteran during this time. Veterans in Houston are issued vouchers for an initial 60-day period, which can be extended following a VA case manager's request or by a direct request to the housing authority by the Veteran. Some Veterans are housed quickly because they have selected a location or housing unit prior to receiving the voucher. If the Veteran is having difficulties finding a unit—often related to his/her background—the housing specialist will assist the Veteran or a VA case manager will accompany the Veteran on housing searches. The peer support specialist may also assist with the housing search. In general, VA case managers and other staff provide the level of support that Veterans need to access housing.

Both housing authorities maintain housing lists but the VA case management teams recommend that Veterans use the internet to search for units. The VA case managers advocate for, support, and educate the Veteran in selecting a unit of his/her choice.

During group and individual meetings, VA case managers discuss potential barriers to housing that Veterans may experience and ways to address these concerns. For example, if a Veteran has a felony charge or a history of broken leases and substance abuse, it may be difficult to locate housing, particularly in a desirable area. The HUD-VASH case management team has developed resources to address issues such as eviction, deposits/utilities, income, and criminal backgrounds, including developing relationships with property owners willing to work with Veterans. Because lack of income can be a challenge in accessing and maintaining housing, the HCHA allows a case-by-case hardship waiver for Veterans with no income.

There are several Veteran-specific buildings in Houston that accept HUD-VASH participants. However, some of these are known to have rampant drug use, prostitution, and criminal activity. Veterans are encouraged to look for units that will support their goals of sobriety and not engaging in criminal behaviors.

INSPECTION

The housing authorities have expedited the inspection process for HUD-VASH applicants. Reinspections typically have a quick turn-around. In a recent innovation, housing authorities have begun to allow property owners to photograph repairs and submit them in lieu of an in-person inspection, which has further expedited this process. In addition, there are a number of project-based vouchers in Houston, all of which are pre-inspected and ready for move-in.

MOVE-IN

Previously, the means for Veterans to access SSVF for security deposit assistance was a multi-step process where VA case managers served as intermediaries between Veterans and SSVF; this required requests for assistance to be made at the level of the VISN Homeless Coordinator. This process was drawn out, not allowing Veterans to collect deposits in a timely manner and leading to threats of eviction. Recently, this procedure was changed so that Veterans can now apply to SSVF directly for assistance with move-in funds.

The Houston VA case management team has a relationship with several organizations that offer furniture vouchers. However, some require that Veterans receive additional case management through their agencies. The VA case management team stated that accessing furniture is a persistent challenge for Veterans.

VA CASE MANAGEMENT

Houston participated in the 14-site Housing First Pilot that was overseen by NCHAV. The entire HUD-VASH VA case management team transitioned from individual care to a team approach in July 2013. Each VA case management team meets at least twice a week (“huddles”) and one VA case manager on each team is assigned an office day to handle paperwork and serve as the main point of contact for emergencies and calendaring issues; these staff are available Monday through Friday for walk-in appointments. The teams determine which VA case manager will see each Veteran based on the location of other meetings scheduled throughout the day. The teams believe that Veterans know that staff are always available to help them with their issues as each Veteran has up to six VA case managers. VA case managers described using each team member’s strengths and areas of expertise to provide a balance to the teams and better serve Veterans.

During the housing search, Veterans are expected to be in contact with their VA case managers on a regular basis; a monthly face-to-face meeting with the VA case manager and monthly contact with a VA housing specialist is the minimum required. A VA case manager may reach out daily or weekly through phone or in-person meetings, depending on the Veteran’s preference, to get an update and help address barriers to housing. VA case managers also make a concerted effort to ensure Veterans understand their leases.

Each Veteran works with a VA case management team to create a psychosocial treatment plan. Veterans typically utilize the VA as their treatment center, but VA case managers also try to

connect them to community resources. The teams indicated that chronically homeless Veterans take a longer time to stabilize in housing and often have multiple instances of housing instability; for this population, the teams make use of all available resources.

After Veterans are housed, VA case managers meet with them as needed—usually monthly—at a convenient place, ideally a Veteran’s home but also their place of employment, the VA, or other locations. VA case managers have access to cars, laptops, cellphones, and wireless hot-spots, so they are able to conduct much of their work in the field and they will drop-in at a Veteran’s home, hangout spots, and/or hospital appointments if they are having difficulty reaching their client.

HUD-VASH participants may take part in regular meetings. Thrives, an optional weekly orientation group, covers topics such as initial enrollment, voucher issuance, the housing search, and community resources. This group helps Veterans navigate the program and stay connected with the VA case management team. At the time of voucher issuance, the VA case management teams hold an optional meet-and-greet at least monthly where Veterans can meet all of the VA case managers and other HUD-VASH participants who have been through the housing process and can give advice on issues such as utilities and housing complexes.

Houston VA case management utilizes the following evidence-based practices: Assertive Community Treatment, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Harm Reduction, Motivational Interviewing, Transtheoretical Model/Stages of Change, Twelve Step Facilitation, Critical Time Intervention, Intensive Case Management, Peer Support/Mentoring, Supported Employment, Housing First, and SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery.

PORTS

The VA case management team indicated that Veterans who live locally in areas without an assigned housing authority can use a Houston voucher in those areas. Otherwise, the Veteran needs to port to another housing authority to live outside of the Houston VA case management service boundaries. One concern in dealing with ports is the Veteran’s VA case management needs and ensuring the Veteran continues to receive needed services and supports. Additionally, understanding the eligibility criteria, income limits, and payment standards of the receiving housing authority are important to ensure the Veteran can maintain housing stability.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exiters

The VA case management team identified a number of reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Increase in income—Often, increases in income are related to Veterans accessing benefits or obtaining employment, making them ineligible for the program, or the portion of rent paid by the housing authority becomes so small that the Veteran returns the voucher.
- Readiness—Veterans may not be ready to live alone. This happens most often among those who have been chronically homeless.

- Nonpayment of rent—Rent payments are particularly difficult for Veterans with limited incomes who may not be able to repay the housing authority should they fall behind in payments.
- Program violations—Program violations may include having additional people living in the unit who are not listed on the voucher.
- Noncompliance with VA case management
- SUD—Veterans with a history of substance abuse may relapse and end up losing their housing.
- Incarceration
- Unit abandonment
- Eviction

Nonleased Exiters

The VA case management team identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Mass briefings—During the 100,000 Homes Campaign, the VA and housing authorities conducted mass voucher briefings with up to 50 Veterans at one time to quickly house them. The VA case management teams described a possible relationship between these mass briefings and Veterans exiting HUD-VASH prior to leasing a unit, due in part to VA case managers' inability to establish rapport. The team described losing contact with these Veterans more easily, especially those who did not have phones. Additionally, they believed that Veterans who enrolled in HUD-VASH during the mass briefings did not have a clear understanding of VA case management requirements and when they learned about the expectations of the program, they decided not to participate.
- Voucher as safety net—VA case managers have found that some Veterans are living with family or friends and view the HUD-VASH voucher as a safety net in case their current housing situation becomes unstable rather than as a mechanism for getting into housing. If Veterans do not need an alternative living situation, they do not use the voucher after it is issued.
- Isolation—VA case managers felt that some Veterans exited HUD-VASH before finding housing because they preferred living with other people or a roommate, which is not usually permitted for HUD-VASH participants due to voucher restrictions. Veterans living in encampments express a fear of loneliness when they move into their own apartment.
- Motivation—A lack of motivation, often paired with an unwillingness to meet with a VA case manager in-person, contributes to Veteran exits during the housing search process.
- Challenging process—Veterans may find the process, from program admission to accessing housing, to be too difficult.
- Loss of contact—VA case managers lose contact with the Veteran during the housing search process

VETERANS IN CRISIS

Veterans in crisis are identified by self-report, observation, or referral. If they are having a financial crisis, the VA case manager will coordinate a referral to an outside agency. If they are having a medical or mental health crisis they are referred to trained clinicians (licensed social workers) and have access to medical care at the VA hospital.

GRADUATION

The goal is for Veterans enrolled in HUD-VASH to graduate from the program, give up VA case management but retain the voucher if needed. To be eligible for graduation, the Veteran must be stably housed and able to pay his/her bills, maintain a steady income, attend all medical appointments, manage mental health issues, if applicable, and be compliant with medications or other doctor's orders. In addition, the Veteran must be able to manage his/her own housing, interact with the housing authority, and handle the voucher recertification process without VA case management.

VA case managers have an open door policy for graduated Veterans; Veterans know that if an issue arises, they can still receive support. Even if a Veteran is eligible for a traditional HCV, s/he will continue to receive HUD-VASH VA case management for at least one year following graduation.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

Both housing authorities have staff dedicated to HUD-VASH. A VA housing coordinator meets with each housing authority and VA case management team weekly, acting as a liaison between the two parties.

Since VA case management is collocated with HCHA, direct contact between VA case managers and the housing authority is possible, making communication easy and efficient, with responses “in real time.” Communication processes with HHA are undergoing some changes to become more efficient; VA case managers stated that it would be ideal to collocate with the HHA as well.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

The Houston VA case management team identified a number of facilitators of housing sustainability for Veterans in the HUD-VASH program:

- Relationship with VA case manager—Establishing rapport with Veterans facilitates housing sustainability. HUD-VASH participants often have limited social support and the VA case management team becomes an objective, supportive force that is available at any time to help them move forward. Veterans look forward to meeting with the VA case managers, which helps them sustain stable housing because they want to maintain contact and communication with the team. VA case managers also believe that they can empower Veterans to advocate for themselves.
- Advocacy—VA case managers advocate for Veterans with property owners, who may be less rigid with Veterans than the general population. Property owners are more likely to rent a unit to Veterans who have a VA case manager to call if there is a housing concern.. The housing specialist, in particular, can assist Veterans with the housing search.

- Employment—The employment specialist helps Veterans find stable income to maintain their housing. Integrating VA and non-VA resources and educating Veterans about resources is also important.

BARRIERS FOR HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

Veterans in Houston face a number of challenges in accessing and sustaining housing, including the following:

- Lack of communication—The lack of communication about HUD-VASH that occurred during the mass voucher briefings was notable. Veterans who entered HUD-VASH during a mass briefing often did not fully understand the program. During these briefings, staff were dealing with a large volume of applicants and were unable to spend sufficient time providing a thorough explanation of the program and its expectations, and the large group environment prevented Veterans from asking questions. Another challenge to housing stability is the VA case manager’s inability to communicate with Veterans unless they present at a designated service location for VA case management as many do not have a phone.
- Personal history—Common barriers to housing are past eviction, prior broken leases, poor credit, and criminal backgrounds, including felonies and arson. Veterans in recovery may have federal charges and the only property owners willing to rent to them are in locations that compromise their recovery.
- Unethical property owners—Unscrupulous property owners may offer quick leases without inspection or having the HAP contract signed. Veterans have also been told that all utilities are covered under the voucher and then asked by the property owner to sign a lease that does not include utilities, leaving the Veteran with utility arrearages. Some Veterans with rent arrearages have been told by property owners that they can leave and the property owner will not follow-up on the missing rent when, in actuality, the property owner subsequently evicted the Veteran, making him/her ineligible for a HCV in the future.
- Financial issues—Veterans with no or low income may have difficulty paying the rent due to money mismanagement, sometimes related to literacy issues and learning disabilities. While SSVF may provide funds at the beginning of the HUD-VASH housing process, there are few resources to assist Veterans with rent arrearages and there are limits on how long a community group can help with rent.
- Untreated cognitive/mental/behavioral health conditions—Veterans with PTSD, TBI, or SUD may have difficulty accessing and maintaining housing.
- Transition from homelessness—The transition from living on the streets to renting a housing unit is easier for some Veterans than others. HUD-VASH may require that Veterans learn a new way of interacting in the world that is too stressful or challenging for some.
- Lack of furniture—A lack of resources for Veterans to set up their housing units makes the HUD-VASH unit not seem like home. Often, to qualify for a furniture voucher, the Veteran must be physically homeless. If a Veteran receives a voucher and signs the lease before receiving furniture, s/he is ineligible for this assistance.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The VA case management team recommends meeting with Veterans individually at the start of the program. The team indicated that mass briefings make it difficult to assist Veterans and ensure they sustain housing.

The VA case management team would like to incorporate additional housing specialists into their staff. Housing specialists can be particularly helpful with Veterans who have special needs or felony records. In addition to assisting with the housing search, the housing specialists can speak to property owners on the Veterans’ behalf.

Houston Housing Authority

HHA has two housing specialists dedicated to HUD-VASH. Veterans are served by HHA staff at the housing authority. Details on HHA’s voucher issuance and payment standards are shown in the table below:

Payment Standard	97% FMR or 102% FMR depending on zip code, 110% FMR in opportunity areas
Portion of Rent that is Veteran’s Responsibility	30–40%
Initial Voucher Issuance Period	60 days

HHA and HCHA use the same application for HUD-VASH, though both require different accompanying documents.

VOUCHER APPLICATION

Veterans are informed of the documents needed to enroll in HUD-VASH at their initial point of entry into the program, whether it be the VAMC, the drop-in center, or through community outreach. VA case managers then request specific information from Veterans during the initial HUD-VASH intake, which includes completing a release allowing the VA to share their information with the housing authority. During a second intake with VA case managers, Veterans are given details on the application process, told again what documents are needed, and informed of the date, time, and location of the next meeting with HHA. Regular meetings are held weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the housing authority, though additional meetings may take place in the community when there are a large number of voucher issuances occurring at once.

Following the intake process, the VA housing coordinator gives the HHA a referral list that includes Veterans’ names, Social Security numbers, and dates of birth. This allows the HHA to complete the sex offender check and eligibility verifications in advance of meeting with the Veteran. This list of names is provided on Monday for the Veterans scheduled to attend a regular meeting on Tuesday or Thursday of that week.

The application is completed during the meeting with the housing authority.

VOUCHER BRIEFING

Veterans generally meet with HHA only one time to complete the HUD-VASH application and participate in a voucher briefing. Regular meetings are held at the HHA on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The VA case management team provides transportation from the VA to the housing authority on Tuesdays, while Veterans are responsible for their own transportation on Thursdays. Additional meetings may be held in the community.

HOUSING SEARCH

HHA refers Veterans to online resources for use during their housing search, including the HCV website and social services on the Harris County Resource Center website. The housing authority has space available in its offices for clients to access housing sites and do online housing searches, and the city has a call center that Veterans can use in their housing search.

HHA also operates 150 project-based vouchers at two Veteran-specific sites downtown: Travis Street Plaza Apartments and Midtown Terrace. There are also several other locations with a large concentration of Veterans, including The DeGeorge.

INSPECTION, HAP CONTRACT, AND LEASE

Once the Veteran identifies a unit, the RFTA must be submitted to HHA. An inspection can then be scheduled. Veterans are given priority during the scheduling of inspections across all groups served by HHA. Before an inspection is set up, the rental offer is determined by looking at rent comparables in the area of the selected unit. This allows the inspector to negotiate rent during the inspection. Rent negotiations are more likely to be an issue for Veterans living with family members. For singles, most property owners accept the initial rent offer.

Most units in Houston fail the first inspection, so move-in is delayed while property owners make repairs and schedule a second inspection. It takes an average of three weeks between submission of the RFTA and the unit passing inspection. Once the unit does pass inspection and the property owner accepts the rent offer, the Veteran can move in immediately.

The lease is executed between the property owner and the Veteran. By law, the VA case manager cannot be involved in this process but can provide education to the Veteran about signing a contract/lease. The HAP contract is executed between the property owner and the housing authority.

PORTS

HHA described a port as a transfer of a Veteran from one jurisdiction to another. To port a voucher, the Veteran alerts his/her VA case manager and housing authority that s/he would like to port. The accepting location can either accept or decline the request. The port must be coordinated to ensure that the voucher is released in the first location before the Veteran moves; a Veteran cannot have two vouchers open at the same time.

REEXAMINATIONS

HHA processes decreases in income immediately, with changes in rent going into effect during the following month. Increases in income are only processed during the annual recertification.

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

HHA sends Veterans a letter and recertification packet with a 90-day notice to begin the recertification process. VA case managers are also notified of these timelines, and they will contact Veterans to remind them about the recertification. Once a Veteran completes the recertification packet, the VA case manager scans the documents to store in the Veteran's record.

REASONS FOR EXITS

As HHA houses an increasing number of Veterans through HUD-VASH, they feel that the process is getting more difficult, even as procedures are becoming more streamlined and efficient. The housing authority indicated that Veterans who were most able to engage with the VA case manager and housing process have already been housed, leaving the most difficult to serve still on the street.

Leased-Up Exiters

HHA identified a number of reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Lease violations—Lease violations range from behavioral issues that are causing problems with neighbors or the property owner to nonpayment of rent.
- Noncompliance with recertification
- Noncompliance with VA case management
- Loss of contact—If the housing authority is unable to contact the Veteran with regard to compliance issues, the Veteran may be terminated from the program.
- Graduation—Veterans who graduate from VA case management can be moved to a regular HCV.
- Unit abandonment
- Voluntary withdrawal from the program

Nonleased Exiters

HHA identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Personal history—Veterans with a criminal background, poor credit history, or histories of eviction have more difficulty finding a unit that will accept them.
- Motivation—Some Veterans lack the motivation needed to be successful in completing the steps necessary to find housing through the HUD-VASH program.
- Transition from homelessness—Veterans who have a long history of homelessness are connected to street life and find the transition to looking for and getting housing overwhelming.
- Mental illness

VETERANS IN CRISIS

When HHA learns that Veterans are facing housing issues, they typically attempt to contact the Veteran via mail. HHA staff may also contact the VA case manager to get the issue resolved.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

HHA has regular meetings with supervisory staff in an effort to improve the program. Recently, HUD-VASH program staff from the housing authority and VA case managers met to allow staff to get to know each other and improve collaboration between the agencies.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

HHA identified a number of facilitators of housing sustainability for Veterans in the HUD-VASH program:

- HUD-VASH Boot Camps—During these events, agencies throughout the community reviewed the current housing process and collaborated on how to improve it.
- Opportunity areas—HHA has a waiver to pay up to 110% FMR in opportunity areas. This allows clients to move into nicer areas, usually with better schools and more community resources.
- Collaboration with VA and local partners—Working together to achieve a common goal enables all providers to reach their objective of ending Veteran homelessness. Projects like the 100,000 Homes Campaign and Houston’s Heros have enabled the housing authority to work with partners to reach what some might consider unattainable goals.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

Veterans in Houston face a number of challenges in accessing and sustaining housing, including the following:

- Mass briefings—During the 100,000 Homes Campaign, the HHA took part in multiple mass voucher briefings. Though the housing authority was able to meet its enrollment goals through these events, these mass briefings had inefficiencies that led to lower success rates than those achieved through individual intakes and briefings with fewer Veterans. Mass briefings are no longer conducted.
- Challenging process—HHA has worked hard to deal with inefficiencies within the HUD-VASH application and housing process. At one time, HHA enumerated the steps involved in housing Veterans and determined that the Veteran had to move through 57 steps. HHA has since worked with the VA to make the process more lean and reduce barriers for Veterans entering the program. Given that HUD-VASH requires so many points of contact with Veterans, there is a high likelihood of mistakes. As the number of steps in the process are decreased so, too, are the number of errors that occur.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

HHA has a number of recommendations that they believe could make HUD-VASH more efficient and better serve Veterans. One suggestion was improving coordinated access to and use of the Vulnerability Index to determine the appropriate level of housing for individual Veterans.

For example, it may be that some Veterans would do better in transitional housing than living independently through the HUD-VASH program. It would be helpful if the coordinated access intake could better determine the services that Veterans receive so that a Veteran who is not ready for independent housing is not using a voucher unsuccessfully, while another Veteran who could use the voucher effectively must wait.

Similarly, it would be helpful if the VA and HHA systems could work in tandem so that both agencies had access to the same information. At times, information in HOMES would be useful to HHA staff who are not permitted access to that system, which includes consent forms. Having one system would make HUD-VASH operate much more effectively.

HUD-VASH participants at HHA would also benefit from more flexibility in program requirements. The housing authority understands that, ideally, the Veteran would be involved in a minimal number of interactions; however, additional interactions are often necessary to fulfill program requirements. For example, it can be difficult for Veterans to provide income verifications, which can delay the housing process. If HHA can confirm that the Veteran is eligible and will be paying a standard amount, it would be beneficial if they could waive the income verification requirement.

HHA has found that inspections and reinspections often delay the housing and recertification processes. The housing authority would like to certify property owners who consistently meet inspection guidelines. Additionally, having less frequent inspections would be helpful for completing recertifications in a more timely way.

Finally, the HHA is aware that some area property owners exploit HUD-VASH Veterans, often because Veterans participating in the program have few housing options. The housing authority would like to be able to debar property owners who engage in unethical practices so that they are held accountable for their actions and understand that they will not be able to continue to rent to tenants receiving housing assistance if they continue this behavior.

Harris County Housing Authority

HCHA has two staff who work on HUD-VASH, including a supervisor (Director of the HCV Program) and one case manager. Veterans are served by HCHA staff at the housing authority. Details on HCHA’s voucher issuance and payment standards are shown in the table below:

Payment Standard	100% FMR, 110% FMR in opportunity areas
Portion of Rent that is Veteran’s Responsibility	30%
Initial Voucher Issuance Period	60 days

HHA and HCHA use the same application for HUD-VASH, though both require different accompanying documents.

VOUCHER APPLICATION

The HUD-VASH HCHA case manager meets with the VA housing coordinator on Tuesdays to discuss the availability of vouchers and schedule voucher meetings. The VA housing coordinator provides the housing authority with a list of Veterans who will be referred to the HCHA. This

allows the housing authority to complete the sex offender check and eligibility verifications in advance. The housing authority schedules a voucher application meeting, which is conducted on Thursdays at HCHA, typically with a group of Veterans rather than individually. VA case managers meet with Veterans first to complete their part of the assessment before introducing the Veterans to the HCHA case manager. The HCHA case manager shows the Veterans a film about HUD-VASH, reviews the application packet and the rules and regulations of the program, and answers any questions Veterans have about the program or materials.

VOUCHER BRIEFING

Prior to the scheduled voucher briefing, The HCHA case manager reviews the completed application packet provided by the VA case manager. If any required documents are missing or out of date (as is often the case since Veterans submit documents during the initial referral phase), the HCHA case manager contacts Veterans regarding additional documents to process the application.

The voucher briefing typically takes place one week after the initial HCHA meeting, also on a Thursday. During the voucher briefing, Veterans are provided with a housing packet that includes a Housing Estimator to help them determine which units they will qualify for and the rent they will be expected to pay. Recently, the housing authority has started to include community providers in these meetings, allowing Veterans to learn about additional community resources, such as move-in assistance. A list of additional community providers is also available.

HOUSING SEARCH

The HCHA case manager assists Veterans in their housing search, particularly those who have criminal histories or other background characteristics that may make it more difficult to find a unit. HCHA has relationships with property owners and has identified several who will accept Veterans with a criminal history. There are also two specific properties where the housing authority will refer Veterans who have exhausted all other options. While these properties are not ideal, because of criminal activity in the area, they do provide housing for Veterans who have been unable to find other options.

Once the Veteran identifies a unit, the RFTA is completed and submitted to the VA case manager. The VA case manager then passes the RFTA to the HCHA inspection department.

INSPECTION, HAP CONTRACT, AND LEASE

The housing authority negotiates rent prior to the inspection by reviewing rent comparables in the area of the selected unit. The majority of property owners in Harris County accept the initial rent offer; however, all units must pass inspection prior to the Veteran moving in.

HCHA prioritizes inspections for HUD-VASH Veterans and schedules them as soon as possible after RFTAs are submitted. Other HCHA clients must submit the packet by the 15th of the month but Veterans are able to submit the RFTA at any time. Inspections typically take place within a day or two unless there is a tenant in the unit. Units usually pass the first inspection. Once a unit passes inspection, the HCHA case manager contacts the property owner to discuss the HAP contract and Veteran move-in. It is possible for the inspection and contract to be completed on the same day that the RFTA is submitted but it usually occurs up to four days later. The property owner and the Veteran plan for the Veteran to move in.

PORTS

The Houston VA case management teams are currently not accepting any incoming ports from other HUD-VASH programs. However, Veterans are allowed to port to another HUD-VASH program. To port from HCHA to another housing authority, a Veteran must first be accepted into VA case management at the receiving VA HUD-VASH program. If the receiving program has available vouchers, the Veteran will receive a voucher directly from the accepting housing authority. If the receiving location does not have any available vouchers, the receiving housing authority can bill HCHA for the Veteran's voucher.

REEXAMINATIONS

Both increases and decreases in income are processed immediately at the HCHA, with changes to rent going into effect the following month.

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

HCHA conducts annual recertification with Veterans in HUD-VASH. The housing authority informs VA case managers about upcoming recertifications so they can assist Veterans in completing this process. The HCHA case managers provide VA case managers with the dates and times of recertification appointments so they can plan to attend them.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exiters

HCHA identified a number of reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Increase in income—Veterans who are found to be over-income are able to remain in the HUD-VASH program for six months. If their income does not decrease during that time, they are terminated after this six month period. If, however, they experience a decrease in income, they can remain in the program and continue to receive rental assistance.
- Noncompliance with recertification
- Noncompliance with VA case management
- Unit abandonment
- SUD
- Mental illness

Nonleased Exiters

HCHA identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Personal history—HCHA indicated that Veterans with a criminal history have a difficult time finding housing where they will be accepted as tenants. This is a major concern in the Houston area.

- Financial issues—The HUD-VASH program requires Veterans to pay a portion of the rent, with a minimum responsibility of \$50. Veterans without income cannot afford to rent a unit with the voucher. HCHA has started to offer zero-income Veterans a hardship waiver so that they will not have an obligation to pay any portion of the rent; this has helped reduce this type of exit.
- Loss of contact
- Mental illness
- Incarceration

VETERANS IN CRISIS

The HCHA case manager is very involved with the Veterans served through HUD-VASH and ensures that Veterans understand that the lease signed with the property owner is a legally binding contract. The housing authority mediates housing issues so that Veterans' future ability to receive assistance is not negatively impacted. One option HCHA often uses is a mutual agreement between the Veteran and the property owner that releases the Veteran from the lease obligation, particularly for Veterans who are entering long-term treatment programs (Veterans entering programs less than 30 days long may remain in their units). Having a mutual agreement in place allows Veterans to return to HUD-VASH with fewer issues following treatment.

If the housing authority learns about a housing issue once an eviction is already in process, the HCHA case manager will try to stop the eviction and get a mutual agreement in place. The Veteran can then be issued a new voucher for a new unit. On occasion, the VA case management team asks the housing authority for flexibility due to Veteran crises. There are times, however, when the HCHA is unable to accommodate VA requests because they are against their regulations.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

Since HCHA and VA case managers are collocated at the housing authority, the teams are in constant communication. The HCHA case manager and the VA housing coordinator meet weekly. The housing authority has provided the VA case managers with frequently used documents so they can assist Veterans with housing questions or concerns. This has also allowed the VA case managers to become more familiar with the housing authority's procedures and processes, improving their understanding and ability to communicate with Veterans.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

HCHA identified a number of facilitators of housing sustainability for Veterans in the HUD-VASH program:

- Collocation of HCHA and VA—The co-location of the HCHA and VA has made the program more efficient and productive. Both teams share the same vision and collaborate to determine how best to serve Veterans. The shared work space also allows the HCHA case manager to refer Veterans directly to the VA case managers on-site.
- Veteran relationships with HUD-VASH staff—The HCHA case manager is very involved with the Veterans served through the housing authority. To keep Veterans in

HUD-VASH, HCHA staff work to understand the story behind Veterans' issues rather than accepting termination. In addition, Veterans often trust the HCHA case manager with their problems, allowing the housing authority to follow-up with Veterans' VA case managers to ensure that they receive the support and assistance they need.

- Veteran pride—HCHA described the pride Veterans feel when they receive their housing packets during the voucher briefing, which translates into taking responsibility for their own progress and housing situation.
- Small size of HUD-VASH program—HCHA is able to be flexible and respond to changing demands because of the program's small size. The HCHA case manager knows all of the HUD-VASH Veterans by name and is able to personally assist them through their housing search and annual recertifications.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

Veterans in Houston face a number of challenges in accessing and sustaining housing, including the following:

- Chronically homeless Veterans—When Houston began to focus on the chronically homeless Veteran population, the length of time to lease-up increased and attrition rates rose.
- Move-in assistance—Many property owners will not let Veterans move in without a letter from a service provider that is offering financial assistance. Many providers require specific documents, such as proof of a passed inspection, which can delay a Veteran's move into the unit.
- Criminal background and credit histories
- Application fees

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the high attrition rate in HUD-VASH, the biggest challenge for HCHA is receiving enough referrals from the VA to keep all of their vouchers in use. The HCHA reports that they have requested additional referrals but do not receive them. They have also asked for an explanation of how the VA referral process works so that this issue could be addressed. HCHA expressed interest in obtaining a larger voucher allocation so that they can better meet the housing needs of Houston's large vulnerable Veteran population.

Step-by-Step Processes

The following chart summarizes the steps in the process of housing Veterans in HUD-VASH—from initial referral to the program to moving into the housing unit—as well as the roles of the VA case managers and housing authorities.

VA Case Management	Houston Housing Authority (HHA)	Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA)
Referral & Admission		
<p>Initial Intake / Referral Screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff at each referral location complete initial intake and verify Veterans' self-reported housing status and paperwork required for voucher application. (Most paperwork is scanned and kept at the VA. If a Veteran turns in a HUD-VASH application and does not return within 30 days, it is then destroyed.) ▪ Referral staff send VA case management team completed referral form and HOMES assessment. ▪ Veteran must sign a release form. 		
<p>Referral Processing</p>		
<p>Prioritization on Interest List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial intake / referral screening determines Veteran eligibility and priority on interest list. ▪ If Veteran is eligible s/he is referred to a housing authority. If not, s/he is referred to a community-based organization. 		
<p>VA Case Manager Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When a voucher is available, VA housing coordinator assigns Veteran to a housing authority and associated VA case management team and provides a referral to the VA team lead. ▪ VA team lead assigns VA case manager based on case load. 		
<p>Enrollment Meeting Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VA case manager reviews screening notes to confirm Veteran eligibility. ▪ VA case manager schedules enrollment meeting. 		
Voucher Application & Briefing		
<p>Enrollment Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For Veterans working with HHA, enrollment meeting takes place in advance of meeting with HHA. ▪ For Veterans working with HCHA, enrollment meeting takes place immediately before the initial meeting with HCHA. 		
<p>Veteran Enrollment in VA Case Management</p>		

VA Case Management	Houston Housing Authority (HHA)	Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA)
<p>Housing Authority Referral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA housing coordinator provides list of referrals with Veteran's name, Social Security number, and date of birth to housing authorities. 		
	<p>Eligibility Verification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HHA completes sex offender check and confirms Veteran eligibility in advance of meeting with Veteran. 	<p>Eligibility Verification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCHA completes sex offender check and confirms Veteran eligibility in advance of meeting with Veteran.
	<p>Voucher Application Completed & Submitted during Voucher Briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veteran completes voucher application and participates in voucher briefing during one meeting held Tuesdays and Thursdays at HHA. HHA case manager contacts Veteran by telephone or letter to schedule a meeting. 	<p>Initial Meeting with Veteran</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCHA case manager meets with Veteran to provide program overview and review application materials. Initial meeting held Thursdays at HCHA.
		<p>Voucher Application Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veteran completes voucher application.
		<p>Voucher Application Submitted during Voucher Briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCHA reviews completed voucher application and conducts voucher briefing. Community providers inform Veteran about additional resources. Voucher briefing held Thursdays at HCHA one week after initial voucher briefing.
Housing Search		
<p>RFTA Submission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager submits RFTA to HCHA inspection department. 	<p>RFTA Processing</p>	<p>RFTA Processing</p>
Inspection & Rent Negotiation		
	<p>Rent Negotiation & Inspection Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HHA determines rent offer and contacts property owner to negotiate rent. HHA schedules an inspection. 	<p>Rent Negotiation & Inspection Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCHA determines rent offer and contacts property owner to negotiate rent. HCHA schedules an inspection.
	<p>Inspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans prioritized for inspections. 	<p>Inspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans prioritized for inspections.
	<p>Reinspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most units fail during the first inspection and must be reinspected. 	<p>Reinspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Units typically pass during the first inspection.

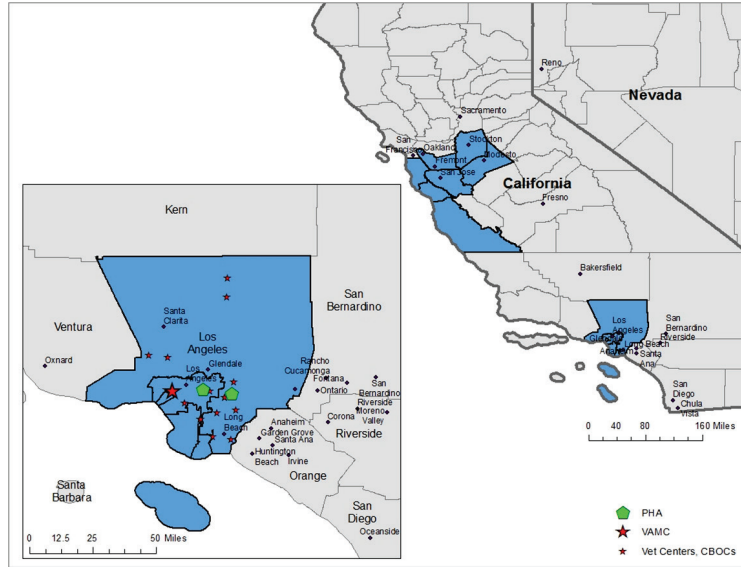
VA Case Management	Houston Housing Authority (HHA)	Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA)
HAP Contract & Lease		
	<p>Execution of Lease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lease details arranged between property owner and Veteran. 	<p>HAP Contract Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCHA case manager contacts property owner to discuss HAP contract and Veteran move-in.
	<p>Execution of HAP Contract</p>	<p>Execution of Lease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lease details arranged between property owner and Veteran.
		<p>Execution of HAP Contract</p>
Move-In		
<p>Move-In Assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans apply to SSVF for assistance with move-in funds. The VA case management team has a relationship with organizations that offer Veterans furniture vouchers. Accessing furniture is a persistent challenge. 		<p>Move-In</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move-in typically takes place between 24 hours and 4 days after inspection.
VA Case Management	Houston Housing Authority (HHA)	Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA)
Referral & Admission		
<p>Initial Intake / Referral Screening Staff at each referral location complete initial intake and verify Veterans' self-reported housing status and paperwork required for voucher application. (Most paperwork is scanned and kept at the VA. If a Veteran turns in a HUD-VASH application and does not return within 30 days, it is then destroyed.) Referral staff send VA case management team completed referral form and HOMES assessment. Veteran must sign a release form.</p>		
Referral Processing		
<p>Prioritization on Interest List Initial intake / referral screening determines Veteran eligibility and priority on interest list. If Veteran is eligible s/he is referred to a housing authority. If not, s/he is referred to a community-based organization.</p>		

VA Case Management	Houston Housing Authority (HHA)	Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA)
<p>VA Case Manager Assignment When a voucher is available, VA housing coordinator assigns Veteran to a housing authority and associated VA case management team and provides a referral to the VA team lead. VA team lead assigns VA case manager based on case load.</p>		
<p>Enrollment Meeting Scheduled VA case manager reviews screening notes to confirm Veteran eligibility. VA case manager schedules enrollment meeting.</p>		
<p>Voucher Application & Briefing</p>		
<p>Enrollment Meeting For Veterans working with HHA, enrollment meeting takes place in advance of meeting with HHA. For Veterans working with HCHA, enrollment meeting takes place immediately before the initial meeting with HCHA.</p>		
<p>Veteran Enrollment in VA Case Management</p>		
<p>Housing Authority Referral VA housing coordinator provides list of referrals with Veteran's name, Social Security number, and date of birth to housing authorities.</p>		
	<p>Eligibility Verification HHA completes sex offender check and confirms Veteran eligibility in advance of meeting with Veteran.</p>	<p>Eligibility Verification HCHA completes sex offender check and confirms Veteran eligibility in advance of meeting with Veteran.</p>
	<p>Voucher Application Completed & Submitted during Voucher Briefing Veteran completes voucher application and participates in voucher briefing during one meeting held Tuesdays and Thursdays at HHA. HHA case manager contacts Veteran by telephone or letter to schedule a meeting.</p>	<p>Initial Meeting with Veteran HCHA case manager meets with Veteran to provide program overview and review application materials. Initial meeting held Thursdays at HCHA.</p>
		<p>Voucher Application Completed Veteran completes voucher application.</p>

VA Case Management	Houston Housing Authority (HHA)	Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA)
		Voucher Application Submitted during Voucher Briefing HCHA reviews completed voucher application and conducts voucher briefing. Community providers inform Veteran about additional resources. Voucher briefing held Thursdays at HCHA one week after initial voucher briefing.
Housing Search		
RFTA Submission VA case manager submits RFTA to HCHA inspection department.	RFTA Processing	RFTA Processing
Inspection & Rent Negotiation		
	Rent Negotiation & Inspection Scheduled HHA determines rent offer and contacts property owner to negotiate rent. HHA schedules an inspection.	Rent Negotiation & Inspection Scheduled HCHA determines rent offer and contacts property owner to negotiate rent. HCHA schedules an inspection.
	Inspection Veterans prioritized for inspections.	Inspection Veterans prioritized for inspections.
	Reinspection Most units fail during the first inspection and must be reinspected.	Reinspection Units typically pass during the first inspection.
HAP Contract & Lease		
	Execution of Lease Lease details arranged between property owner and Veteran.	HAP Contract Review HCHA case manager contacts property owner to discuss HAP contract and Veteran move-in.
	Execution of HAP Contract	Execution of Lease Lease details arranged between property owner and Veteran.
		Execution of HAP Contract
Move-In		
Move-In Assistance Veterans apply to SSVF for assistance with move-in funds. The VA case management team has a relationship with organizations that offer Veterans furniture vouchers. Accessing furniture is a persistent challenge.		Move-In Move-in typically takes place between 24 hours and 4 days after inspection.

APPENDIX F: LOS ANGELES SITE DESCRIPTION

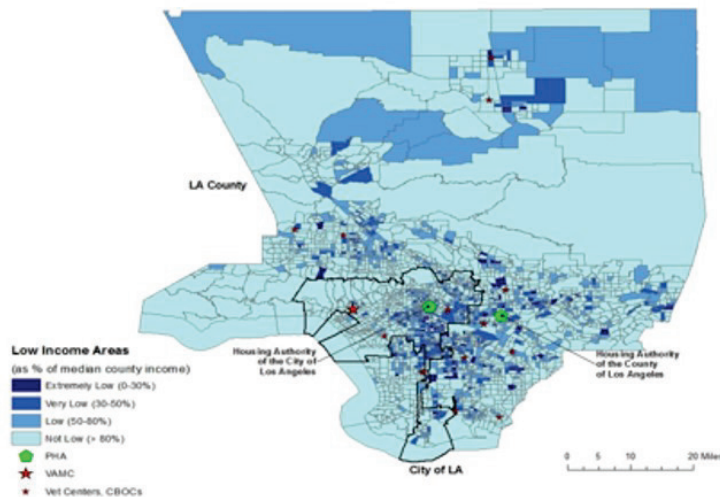
The Los Angeles HUD-VASH program’s service area includes Greater Los Angeles County as well as the counties of Ventura, Kern, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. For the HUD-VASH Program in Los Angeles, areas are divided by Service Planning Areas (SPAs) due to the large geography of the county. The coordinating VA site is the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System in Los Angeles, CA. The HUD-VASH program has 5,069 vouchers. The majority of vouchers are held by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA, 3,179) and the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA, 1,293). HACLA can serve Veterans within the City of Los Angeles. HACoLA can serve Veterans anywhere in the county.



Housing Context

The following maps provide context for the housing markets in which Veterans participating in the Los Angeles HUD-VASH program conduct their housing search.

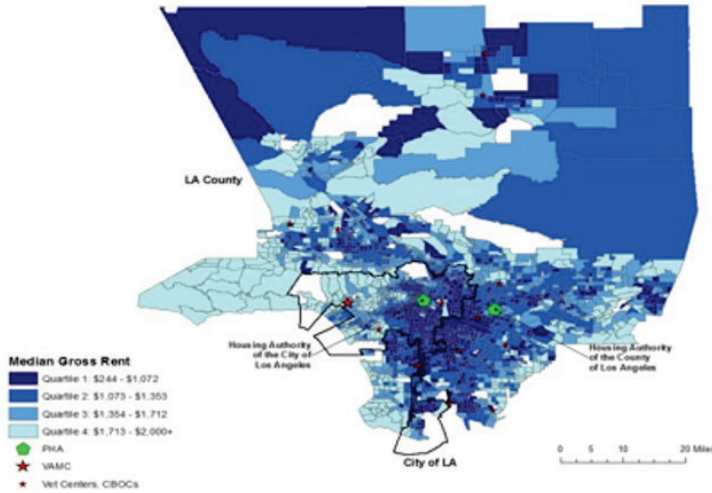
Map 1 Low income areas, Los Angeles



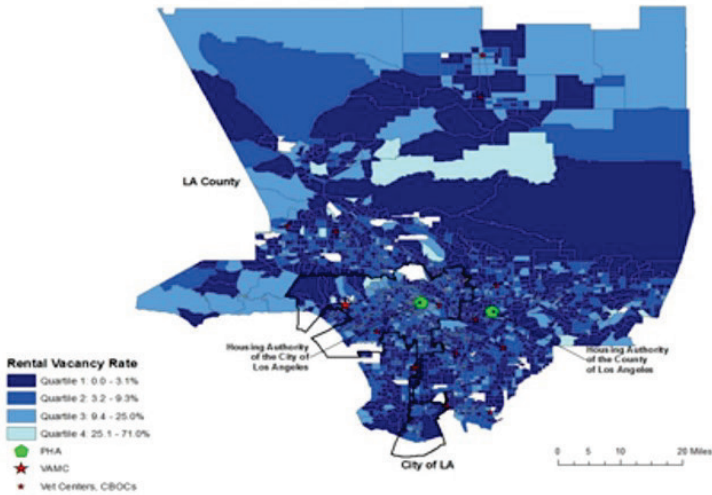
Map 1 outlines low, very low, and extremely low income areas based on median county income. Lower income areas—shaded in dark blue—are located throughout the County of Los Angeles, though low income areas near the coast are rare. Most low income areas are toward the city center, northwest of the city limits, or farther north, closer to the county boarder. While the VAMC is not located in a low income area, there are other Vet Centers and CBOCs throughout the city that are in closer proximity to lower income areas. Additionally,

both HACLA and HACoLA are fairly centrally located for a low income Veteran who is going through the HUD-VASH housing process and annual recertification.

Map 2 Median gross rent, Los Angeles



Map 3 Rental vacancy rate, Los Angeles



Map 3 provides details about the rental vacancy rate by quartile. Darker areas have lower vacancy rates. It is clear from this map that the city has a tight housing market, with few vacancies. Areas that are not low income and have high median rents along the coast have higher vacancy rates but these are unlikely to be areas that Veterans in HUD-VASH can afford. Areas closer to the city center have slightly lower vacancy rates.

VA Case Management

The site has 138 VA staff serving Veterans, including two HUD-VASH screeners, six supervisors, 107 social workers, 84 of whom are HUD-VASH case managers, one psychiatrist, three SUD specialists, six vocational rehabilitation specialists, two housing specialists, six peer support specialists, and five nurses. The case load is approximately 1:35. HUD-VASH staff in Los Angeles are organized into five teams at eight locations, five of which are project-based. Teams are organized by SPA, with each team

serving a specific part of the service area.

Team	Associated Housing Authorities	Service Location	Team Composition
SPA 1	HACoLA	Antelope Valley	
SPA 2	HACLA/HACoLA	San Fernando Valley	
SPA 3	HACLA/HACoLA	San Gabriel Valley	
SPA 4	HACLA/HACoLA	Metro LA	
SPA 5	HACLA/HACoLA	West	
SPA 6	HACLA/HACoLA	South	
SPA 7	HACLA/HACoLA	East	
SPA 8	HACLA/HACoLA	South Bay	
ACT 1			ACT Team
ACT 2			ACT Team
ACT 3			ACT Team

OUTREACH

The Los Angeles VA case management team receives referrals to HUD-VASH from a number of sources, including other VA programs—GPD, domiciliaries, and the VA screening clinic—as well as community-based organizations. Veterans also learn about HUD-VASH from other Veterans via word of mouth; Veterans housed through HUD-VASH often reach out to homeless Veterans and encourage them to apply to the program. Outreach events, like Stand Downs, and peer support are also significant sources of referrals.

REFERRALS AND ELIGIBILITY

All referral sources, including those within the VA, complete a referral form. Two HUD-VASH screeners process referrals daily and ensure that Veterans meet the program’s eligibility criteria. The HUD-VASH screeners confirm homelessness in both CPRS and HOMES, which must indicate that the Veteran is “literally homeless.” If the Veteran is not in CPRS, intake workers rely on self-reports. Walk-in applicants are screened directly by a HUD-VASH screener and do not require a referral form. Los Angeles does not currently maintain an interest list as the VA case management program is adequately staffed and has received additional vouchers, enabling the program to accept Veterans very quickly.

TARGETING

The HUD-VASH program in Los Angeles originally targeted only chronically homeless Veterans, which led to many unused vouchers as this is the hardest population to reach and the least likely to accept VA case management. The program has since expanded its targeting criteria to include women, families, OEF/OIF/OND, elderly, very low to no income, and Veterans with a serious mental illness or SUD. By targeting other priority groups in addition to those experiencing chronic homelessness, the program is accepting more at-risk Veterans, most pointedly those from current wars with PTSD or TBI. Additionally, the program in Los Angeles has refined its definition of chronic homelessness to include Veterans who have had shorter, day-long homeless episodes, whereas previously Veterans had to experience homeless episodes of two weeks or more.

ADMISSION

During the referral process, Veterans indicate which SPA they would like to live in. However, Veterans are able to select housing across any of Los Angeles County SPAs regardless of what they first indicated. After consulting with the supervisor in that SPA, the VA screeners assign the Veteran to a VA case manager based on availability. The VA case manager receives an email indicating that a Veteran has been added to his/her case load. If a HOMES assessment has not already been completed for the Veteran, the VA case manager will collect this information, which includes details about the Veteran’s homeless background, income, employment, education, substance use, medical diagnoses, and family contacts. The VA case manager will also conduct a chart review and request a release of information from the Veteran allowing the VA case manager to speak with the housing authority and property owners throughout the housing process.

At this point, the Veteran is also informed about the program’s mandatory VA case management component. If a Veteran is not interested in VA case management, s/he may opt out of the program and be directed to other housing alternatives. If the Veteran is interested in and eligible

for the program, the VA case manager admits the Veteran without any further review. If there are eligibility questions, the VA case manager consults the supervisors; all program denials must be processed through the supervisor.

VOUCHER APPLICATION

Once a Veteran is accepted into the program, the VA case manager instructs him/her to collect the necessary paperwork for the voucher application and assists the Veteran in completing it. The Veteran is not referred to the housing authority until the entire application packet is complete; completed materials are submitted to the housing authority by HUD-VASH staff or the HUD-VASH case manager.

HACLA has two meetings scheduled each week for voucher briefings. HACoLA offers one meeting per week, though the time often changes. Not having a set voucher briefing time may cause difficulties in scheduling Veterans to meet with the housing authority, particularly those without phones or an easy means of contact. The VA peer support specialist attends these meetings and transports Veterans from the VA to the housing authorities.

HOUSING SEARCH

Locally, the goal is for a Veteran to move into a housing unit within 90 days of admission to HUD-VASH, though Veterans have 120 days to locate a unit. Veterans are not encouraged to look for a unit until after they have received a voucher as they will not know the estimated amount of their voucher until they meet with the housing authority. VA case managers noted that there is a quick turnover for rental units in Los Angeles; if a unit is available, the Veteran must be ready to rent immediately. Most property owners will not meet with a Veteran unless the Veteran has a voucher and RFTA in-hand.

During the first few weeks following the voucher briefing, Veterans often search for—and find—units to rent. If several weeks have passed and a Veteran has not identified a unit, the VA case manager will become more actively involved, assisting the Veteran by pulling a list of available units and helping him/her review and eliminate units using online resources, such as Google Maps, to assess neighborhoods and potential housing options. The VA case manager will help the Veteran narrow down where to live based on his/her individual needs; however, the team indicated that using a HCV is more difficult in some areas than others. Veterans may find units in more desirable areas but this typically requires a lot of effort on the Veteran's part. A VA housing specialist also cultivates relationships with local property owners and investigates housing options for Veterans.

If the Veteran continues to have difficulty finding a unit, the VA peer support specialist will become more involved with the housing search. The VA peer support specialist maintains a list of housing websites and relationships with property owners who will inform him/her about open units. In addition, the VA peer support specialist hosts a weekly Housing Readiness Group where Veterans are instructed on what their vouchers cover, how to present themselves to property owners, what to bring to meetings with property owners, and how to answer property owners' questions. Finally, the VA peer support specialist is particularly concerned with neighborhood red flags—such as areas where drugs are sold and used—and tries to help Veterans avoid triggers that may compromise their housing stability.

INSPECTION

The Los Angeles VA case management team indicated that after the Veteran submits the RFTA, the housing authorities schedule the inspection rather quickly, usually within 15 days. The housing authorities do not communicate with VA case managers directly about the results of the inspection; VA case managers hear through word of mouth when a unit passes. The inspection department sends paperwork to housing authority advisors for rent negotiations. Execution of the final lease agreement may be delayed due to reinspections and rent negotiations, which can be frustrating for property owners. In at least a few instances, though, the inspection, lease signing, and move-in have all been accomplished on the same day.

MOVE-IN

From the time that Veterans are first assigned a VA case manager, they are encouraged to save money for a security deposit and move-in costs. Veterans with higher levels of income may not need assistance. Those who do need assistance may be referred to SSVF if funds are available or to other community agencies. AmVets assists with furniture and offers free delivery as well as vouchers for their thrift store and food, but requires 30 days or more for processing.

VA CASE MANAGEMENT

The following table describes VA case management requirements:

During housing process	Weekly phone calls; one monthly face-to-face visit
Year 1	Monthly face-to-face visit
Year 2	Quarterly face-to-face visit
Year 3+	Two face-to-face visits annually
Notes	Once a Veteran is accepted into HUD-VASH, the VA case manager becomes the first point of contact at the VA for all case management services. If Veteran is unreachable, VA case manager will leave a note in the Veteran's medical record asking providers to notify social work when they meet with the Veteran. VA case managers will also try to locate Veterans at other VA appointments.

Once a Veteran is accepted into HUD-VASH, the VA case manager becomes his/her first point of contact at the VA. The Veteran can no longer go to the screening clinic to access emergency shelter; instead, the VA case manager will refer the Veteran to services. The VA case management team feels this is an important engagement strategy and helps to build trust with the Veteran and address individual needs and barriers.

VA case managers strive to balance completing required paperwork with building rapport with Veterans, which they say is especially important when referring them to other services. This rapport is usually strengthened when the VA case manager goes through each step in the housing process with the Veteran, from completing the voucher application through move-in. The VA team indicated that they have greater difficulty working with Veterans who are transferred to their case load. Working with the Veteran through the entire process also allows VA case managers to assess how much support the Veteran will need once s/he is housed and if s/he may benefit from more wraparound services.

There are three VA SUD specialists across all of the VA case management teams in Los Angeles, each covering three SPAs. SUD specialists lead group meetings and conduct crisis counseling in addition to carrying a full case load. VA case management teams in Los Angeles also have two or more VA peer support specialists for each SPA; they provide a variety of services including transportation, some case management, housing search assistance, wellness checks, and help with paperwork, and have recently begun to facilitate groups. All SPAs also have a registered nurse to consult on health issues and provide some home health services.

The Los Angeles HUD-VASH program received funding for three ACT teams beginning in FFY 2014, which will enable the program to provide more wraparound services. The final VA staffing array has not been finalized but may include nurses, social workers, and/or psychiatrists.

Veterans who do not have phones are asked to check in with their VA case manager at a set time each week, at least during the initial housing process. Other Veterans are expected to have one face-to-face monthly VA case management contact and weekly phone calls during this time. After that, VA case managers typically meet with Veterans monthly for one year, quarterly the second year, and then semi-annually the third year. If VA case managers have difficulty contacting Veterans, they leave a note in the Veteran's VA medical record asking providers to notify social work if they meet with the client. They also view Veterans' other VA appointments and locate the Veteran at those times.

Los Angeles utilizes the following evidence-based practices: ACT, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Harm Reduction, Motivational Interviewing, Twelve Step Facilitation, Intensive Case Management, Peer Support/Mentoring, Supported Employment, Housing First, and SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery.

PORTS

If Veterans want to move out of the central urban area of Los Angeles and into one of the valleys, the VA case management team will usually refer them to Kern County Housing Authority.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exiters

The VA case management team identified a number of reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Withdrawal—Veterans may no longer need VA case management following a long period of housing stability.
- Lease violations—VA case managers try to mediate issues between the Veteran and the property owner to avoid an eviction. If the property owner agrees to release the housing authority from responsibility, the Veteran can be re-vouchered and look for alternative housing.
- Incarceration
- Loss of contact

Nonleased Exiters

The VA case management team identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Increase in income—Veterans may attain employment or receive additional benefits that make them ineligible for the program.
- Housing preference—Veterans may not like the available housing, would prefer to live in an area that has few options for those using a HCV, or relocate before finding a unit with their voucher.
- Withdrawal—Veterans may get married or enter another phase of their lives and no longer need or are interested in the program.
- Substance abuse relapse
- Mental illness
- Loss of contact

VETERANS IN CRISIS

The VA case manager is typically the first person to learn that a Veteran is having a housing issue, either from the Veteran him/herself, the property owner or other tenants. The VA case management team generally learns about issues before the housing authority and they can often mediate. Eviction-level lease violations have occurred with Veterans in HUD-VASH but extenuating circumstances have prohibited the VA case managers from mediating the issue, such as an inability to contact the Veteran or property owner. There have been instances when property owners do not inform the housing authority that a Veteran is no longer staying in the unit or is going through the eviction process and continues to receive the housing authority's portion of the rent; in these cases, it is essential that the Veteran inform the VA case manager to receive assistance.

GRADUATION

A Veteran may graduate from HUD-VASH after a significant time of successful independent living and a mutual agreement between the Veteran and HUD-VASH case manager that the Veteran has successfully met or made sufficient progress with treatment plan goals and obtained maximum benefit from program participation. Veterans can retain the HCV as long as housing authority requirements continue to be met. After discharge, a Veteran's HUD-VASH voucher is converted into a regular HCV when one is available. While Veterans are using HUD-VASH HCVs after discharge they will be contacted several times a year by an aftercare case manager to ensure continued success. Veterans can also retain the right, as HUD-VASH "alumni," to contact the program for any follow-up assistance at any time, even after the voucher is converted.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

Dedicated HUD-VASH staff serve as liaisons with the housing authorities throughout the HUD-VASH process. HACLA staff contact the VA peer support specialist about upcoming meetings scheduled with Veterans. The peer support specialists, in turn, communicate this information to the VA case managers. A HUD-VASH peer support specialist and supervisor serve as liaisons to

HACoLA and attend weekly meetings to discuss individual case issues as well as address any programmatic concerns.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

The Los Angeles VA case management team identified a number of facilitators of housing sustainability among Veterans in HUD-VASH:

- **Motivation**—VA case managers use Motivational Interviewing to address the underlying issues that may prevent a Veteran from being successfully housed. Case managers and peer support specialists rely on personal stories to combat the “fear of success” and offer reassurance that the Veteran is capable of succeeding.
- **Supportive relationships**—By participating in VA case management, the Veteran is surrounded by the team. The VA case management team also works to support the Veteran in reestablishing family relationships.
- **Connection to resources**—The availability of a nurse on the team is helpful for Veterans with ongoing medical issues; some nursing services are provided directly in the home. VA case managers also facilitate connections to VA providers and community programs, including adult day care and senior centers.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

The Los Angeles VA case management team identified a number of challenges to housing sustainability among Veterans in HUD-VASH:

- **Housing process**—The lag between inspection and lease signature can be a barrier to accessing housing; Veterans are told that “the clock stops” on their voucher when the RFTA is submitted, but many still feel anxious and may change their minds at that point or the property owner may turn down the housing authority’s rent offer.
- **Vulnerability**—The VA case management team described the difficulty of providing case management to this hard-to-serve population, many of whom do not engage well with VA case managers and the community. A Veteran described the challenge of overcoming the “homeless mentality.”
- **Mental illness and SUD**—The VA case management team has an insufficient number of VA SUD specialists; they primarily focus on crisis management rather than supporting Veterans before they fall into crisis. In addition, VA case managers do not have sufficient access to Veterans’ psychiatrists; additional psychiatrists are needed to adequately address the Veterans’ needs.
- **Chronic medical conditions and chronic pain**—Extensive medical challenges can be daunting at an emotional level (e.g., threat of future paralysis) as well as the physical level (e.g., not being physically able to complete paperwork).
- **Financial issues**—Accessing move-in and other assistance is difficult for Veterans in Los Angeles.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The HUD-VASH program in Los Angeles is adding a second VA case management team for each SPA as well as staff to support an ACT team. A VA incentive specialist would be helpful in assisting Veterans to obtain benefits. VA case managers also indicated that an occupational therapist would be useful for Veterans in West Los Angeles.

Members of the VA case management team participated in the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) training sponsored by NCHAV, which allows staff to provide therapy for Veterans in their homes. Additional funding to educate staff on other evidence-based treatments would be useful moving forward.

Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles

HACLA has 17.5 staff dedicated to HUD-VASH. This includes a half-time manager and two assistant managers, who supervise the teams; eight eligibility interviewers, who conduct the initial interviews, determine eligibility, issue vouchers, process RFTAs, and contract housing; four advisors, who conduct annual, special, and interim recertifications and requests to move; one administrative assistant whose sole duty is to assess every file for quality control before voucher issuance and prior to signature of the HAP contract; and two clerks. The case load is 450 Veterans per advisor. HACLA staff serve Veterans at the housing authority and other locations, as needed, to accommodate disabled Veterans. Details on HACLA’s voucher issuance and payment standards are shown in the table below:

Payment Standard	100-110%FMR
Portion of Rent that is Veteran’s Responsibility	30-40%
Initial Voucher Issuance Period	120 days

HACLA is clear about its role in the HUD-VASH program: the housing authority provides housing, not counseling. They reported that they handle the HUD-VASH program much more expediently than the regular HCV program; referrals to HUD-VASH are processed on the day the Veteran is interviewed and the voucher is issued the following Friday.

VOUCHER APPLICATION

HACLA provides the VA case management team with application materials. The VA case managers assist Veterans in completing the application and collecting required documents. HACLA staff conduct eligibility interviews at the housing authority on Thursdays, at which time the Veteran submits the application and documents. HACLA eligibility interviewers conduct a full interview, verify application details, and ensure all required forms are completed and signed. The Veteran is invited to a voucher briefing at the housing authority the following Friday.

After the interview, HACLA processes the file, completes a sex offender check, and confirms eligibility and income. The sex offender check can be done online immediately through the HUD website, which avoids delays. The number of attendees during the Thursday eligibility interviews varies, and the housing authority may or may not know how many Veterans to expect. As much as possible, the housing authority tries to assign the Veteran to the staff member who completed

the initial interview. HACLA holds voucher briefings at the housing authority on Fridays outlining all program processes and forms, including the RFTA, inspection, and housing requirements. HACLA staff give Veterans an estimate of the maximum rent for which they will be approved and the expected portion for which they will be responsible. Veterans receive a voucher following the information sessions.

HOUSING SEARCH

Veterans and the VA case management team conduct the housing search. The housing authority refers Veterans to online resources but does not actively connect them with particular property owners or properties. Once a Veteran identifies a unit, the RFTA is completed and submitted to the housing authority. The Veteran may submit the RFTA to the housing authority during walk-in hours (Monday–Thursday, 8–11 am and 1–3 pm) or the VA case manager can fax the RFTA to HACLA.

INSPECTION

The HACLA eligibility interviewer contacts the property owner to set up an inspection within two days of RFTA submission. Inspections are usually scheduled for three days from the date of contact. Prior to the inspection, the HACLA eligibility interviewer updates the Veteran file, establishes a new property owner in HACLA’s system, if necessary, and reviews internal rent comparables to ensure the requested rent is within the voucher payment standards. The HACLA inspector inspects the unit and runs a comparable rent report through the AREA system. The inspection results and comparables are made available to the eligibility interviewer within three days of the inspection; once verified, the eligibility interviewer forwards the results to the contractor.

HAP CONTRACT AND LEASE

Following the inspection, the HACLA eligibility interviewer contacts the property owner to make a rent offer. If the offer is accepted, the property owner meets with the Veteran to have the lease signed and sends it to the housing authority for review. The HACLA contractor eligibility interviewer contacts the Veteran and determines a move-in date. The Veteran can move in immediately unless s/he needs time to secure funds for the security deposit. The housing authority provides a rent breakdown that outlines the security deposit and describes the Veteran’s rent responsibility. Some local funding sources require this documentation as a condition for providing move-in assistance.

Once the owner and tenant sign a lease agreement HACLA generates the HAP contract, which is executed by both the owner and housing authority within 60 days of the of the lease start date. HACLA generally pays owners within days of the contract execution.

PORTS

HACLA and HACoLA have an inter-jurisdictional agreement that allows both agencies to contract within each other’s jurisdiction to eliminate the portability processing time from one housing authority to another. However, if a HACLA voucher holder finds a unit in distant areas in HACoLA’s jurisdiction (e.g., Lancaster, Palmdale), HACLA will process the portability to HACoLA as it would pose a burden on HACLA staff to inspect and to conduct home visits. The portability process for applicants and participants is as follows:

- VA case manager informs HACLA of the Veteran's request to port and that VA will continue to provide case management in the new location or that they have coordinated with the agency that will provide the case management.
- The Veteran specifies which housing authority s/he want to port to and signs and dates the request.
- The eligibility interviewer prepares the file for the voucher holder and submits it to the Outgoing Portability Unit, which notifies the receiving housing authority of the port they will be receiving and that it is a HUD-VASH applicant/participant. HACLA has no control over the receiving housing authority's process.
- Veterans who graduate from VA case management are typically converted to a regular HCV.

REEXAMINATIONS

HACLA learns about changes to Veteran income from the VA case manager or the Veteran. The VA case manager will usually submit documents needed to process the change. A decrease in income is processed immediately as a Special Review, with the change of rent going into effect the first day of the following month. The participant is required to inform HACLA of any increases after the Special Review, which will be processed immediately with a 30-day notice of the increase to the tenant. Increases in income are only processed during a Special Review if they were preceded by a decrease in income; otherwise, these increases are not processed until the annual review period.

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

During the annual review, the HACLA advisor reviews the Veteran's income, processes changes, and inspects the unit. The HACLA advisor also assists Veterans with their requests to move.

Veterans are informed of the recertification three months in advance when HACLA sends the Veteran an appointment letter with the application for recertification. If Veterans do not attend the appointment or they reschedule, they may be scheduled for a second or third appointment. If the Veteran does not comply with his/her appointment, HACLA sends a 14-day notice stating that if the Veteran does not comply by a given date, s/he may be terminated from the program. HACLA will send the Veteran a 30-day intent-to-terminate notice before removing the Veteran from the program.

HACLA notifies the VA case management teams of all recertification correspondence. They are encouraged to assist the Veteran when the 14-day notice is issued, and more aggressively when the 30-day notice is issued, to help the Veteran retain the HCV. HACLA will stop the termination process if the Veteran complies with the requirements prior to the termination date.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exiters

HACLA identified a number of reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Increase in income—Veterans whose income increases may no longer be eligible for assistance.
- Withdrawal—Veterans who feel that they no longer need assistance may voluntarily relinquish their vouchers, often stating that they would like to pass the voucher on to another Veteran who needs it more.
- Entry into a different program—Veterans may find that another housing assistance program is a better fit for them.
- Eviction—The main reason Veterans are evicted from their unit is for nonpayment of rent.
- Noncompliance with recertification—Veterans will be terminated from the program if they do not complete their annual recertification.
- Noncompliance with VA case management—If Veterans do not comply with mandatory VA case management, VA can terminate them from the program.
- Program violations—Veterans can be terminated from the program for violating program rules, including subletting the unit or having unauthorized people living in the household.
- Absence of 30 or more days—Veterans cannot be absent from a unit for more than 30 days without informing the housing authority. If Veterans are to be hospitalized for more than 30 days, or they enter a treatment program, they may request an allowance from the housing authority. If the housing authority is aware of the absence, they can allow Veterans to be absent from the unit for no more than 90 days.¹³
- Voucher expiration—Veterans may ask to move during the annual recertification process. If Veterans make this request, they are issued a new voucher and given 120 days to complete the housing search again. If these Veterans do not lease new units and they have moved out of the assisted unit, they can be terminated from the program.¹⁴
- Graduation—Veterans who graduate from HUD-VASH are converted to regular HCVs.
- Fraud and criminal activity—Veterans who knowingly provide inaccurate information related to their eligibility or income commit fraud and are terminated from the program.
- Unit abandonment—Some Veterans leave the unit without notice and cannot be located by the housing authority or VA.
- Incarceration
- Death

¹³ HACLA policy allows participants who are terminated for being out of the unit for more than 90 days to be reinstated if they return within one year of the termination and provide verification that the absence was due to participation in SUD or medical treatment. The Veteran must provide evidence and a statement from the VA case manager that they are continuing to receive case management.

¹⁴ HACLA policy allows 30-day hardship extensions to the voucher and also allows for extensions due to a medical condition up to 240 days in total.

Nonleased Exiters

HACLA identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- **Withdrawal**—Some Veterans decide that they are not interested in participating in HUD-VASH once they learn more about it.
- **Readiness**—The VA case manager may recommend that Veterans are not ready for independent housing and that they withdraw from the program.
- **Entry into a different program**—Veterans may find that another housing assistance program is a better fit for them.
- **Inability to locate a unit**—Veterans may not find a unit within the allotted 120 days.
- **Increase in income**—Veterans who have an increase in income may no longer be eligible for assistance.
- **Death**

VETERANS IN CRISIS

HACLA staff believe it is important that they be made aware of any housing issues with Veterans. Property owners are required to inform HACLA if a Veteran is not paying his/her rent so that the housing authority can begin the notification process with the Veteran. If HACLA finds that the Veteran is in danger of losing his/her housing, HACLA staff will engage the VA case manager. Likewise, the contract between HACLA and the property owner requires that the property owner report any actions being taken against a Veteran, such as a three-day notice to comply or an eviction.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

HACLA and VA staff conduct a weekly teleconference (Wednesday at 11:00 am) to deal with application problems, participant issues, changes to procedures, and any other challenges that arise. A monthly meeting between HACLA and VA directors provides an opportunity to address lease-up goals. HACLA generates a weekly summary report on the status of all referrals from the VA, allowing the VA the opportunity to reconcile their records and ensure that all referrals are legitimate. In addition, both HACLA and VA hold periodic training for staff.

HACLA staff indicated that they work with the VA to address any issues while drawing clear distinctions between the two agencies' areas of responsibility. Though each has different duties, they have learned to work together to improve and streamline processes and have engaged community partners interested in playing an active role in assisting Veterans. HACLA has a point of contact for VA case management teams and copies them on all correspondence to Veterans. Sometimes the housing authority is aware of an individual Veteran's VA case manager and other times they are not, as the assignment of VA case managers often changes.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

HACLA identified a number of facilitators of housing sustainability for Veterans in the HUD-VASH program:

- Streamlined application—VA case management teams complete the application, which streamlines the process for the Veteran and the housing authority. HACLA has coordinated with HACoLA to generate one core application for the program across the entire Los Angeles service area. Though additional revisions need to be made, the core application has simplified the process as VA case managers no longer have to use two separate applications.
- Streamlined voucher issuance—HACLA has prioritized Veterans in HUD-VASH, streamlining processes and making them more efficient. Veterans can move from the eligibility interview to obtaining a voucher in one week, which the housing authority believes increases the Veterans' motivation. The regular eligibility interview and voucher briefing times have made the process more convenient.
- HUD-VASH Interjurisdictional Agreement between HACLA and HACoLA—Both agencies can contract within the other's jurisdiction, eliminating the portability processing time that can add 30–60 days to the process.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

Veterans in Los Angeles face a number of challenges to accessing and sustaining permanent housing, including the following:

- Transition from homelessness—HACLA acknowledged the difficulty some Veterans have transitioning from chronic homelessness to economic stability. Obtaining security deposit assistance has also been a barrier to housing for some Veterans.
- Multiple points of contact—HUD-VASH participants in LA work with many individuals, including the VA case manager, the HACLA eligibility interviewer/contractor, HACLA advisor, and potentially the HACLA clerk, which can complicate things and create confusion.
- Misunderstanding—HACLA staff mentioned that often Veterans state that they understand program requirements when it seems clear that they do not.
- VA case management advocacy—HACLA has programmatic rules and calculations that apply to all clients. They are unable to be flexible on many of these rules. At times, however, a VA case manager may try to advocate for a client rather than assisting the client in complying with the program.
- Different requirements between local housing authorities—The Los Angeles housing authorities operate independently with agency-specific procedures and forms, which can make the process more complex for VA case managers who may be assisting Veterans at both housing authorities.
- Provision of ongoing supportive services from the VA—Veterans may lose their housing when direct, ongoing case management supportive services could have assisted them in maintaining their housing.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

HACLA is constantly evaluating HUD-VASH and looking for areas for improvement. The housing authority tries to copy a VA case management point of contact on all correspondence

that is sent to Veterans. However, HACLA staff recognize that this may be overwhelming and not useful. Additional dialogue may be necessary to determine what information will make the biggest impact for the Veterans. HACLA is in the process of purchasing a program that will allow their system to automatically generate third-party notices so that they can include individual VA case managers as well as general VA contacts on notices.

HACLA has been granted a waiver from HUD that has streamlined the recertification process. Rather than providing all of the verifications for bank accounts, Veterans may self-certify accounts under \$5,000.

Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles

HACoLA has four case managers serving all homeless programs, including HUD-VASH. The case load is approximately 257 per case manager. Veterans are served by HACoLA staff at the housing authority as well as the VAMC. Details on HACoLA’s voucher issuance and payment standards are shown in the table below:

Payment Standard	90% FMR
Portion of Rent that is Veteran’s Responsibility	Up to 40% of monthly adjusted income at time of contract execution. Portion of rent may increase at time of annual recertification based on Veteran’s income and/or approval of owner’s rent increase request.
Initial Voucher Issuance Period	120 days

VOUCHER APPLICATION

The VA case managers assist Veterans in preparing their voucher application and required documentation. HACoLA staff review application materials at the VAMC at a regular meeting time on Thursdays and inform Veterans immediately if anything is missing from the application. HACoLA staff submit the completed applications to the housing authority and run the sex offender check and necessary verifications. Veterans may also submit applications to HACoLA via email or fax.

VOUCHER BRIEFING

After Veterans have submitted their application and the housing authority has confirmed eligibility, Veterans attend a voucher briefing session at the VAMC, typically within two weeks following application submission. Voucher briefings take place at a regular meeting time on Thursdays, usually in a group setting. If a Veteran is unable to attend the Thursday meeting, HACoLA can arrange an individual meeting.

HOUSING SEARCH

During the voucher briefing, HACoLA provides Veterans with a resource card to use during the housing search and points Veterans to www.socialserve.com, which is administered by LA County Housing Resource and provides information on available housing units specific to Veterans and the HUD-VASH program. It also allows users to map the location of a unit and the distance to public transportation, shopping, and medical centers and links to other services provided throughout the county.

The voucher issuance period can be extended up to 180 days or longer, depending on circumstances (e.g., medical issues, reasonable accommodations, disabilities). However, if a Veteran is approaching 180 days, HACoLA staff will reach out to the VA to get the Veteran housed immediately.

INSPECTION, HAP CONTRACT, AND LEASE

Once the Veteran locates a unit, the Veteran or case manager submits the RFTA to HACoLA. HACoLA staff contact the property owner to negotiate the rent. If the property owner accepts the rent offer and the unit is affordable for the Veteran, the housing authority schedules an inspection, typically within 10 days. If the unit fails inspection, the inspector schedules a follow-up appointment while at the property; however, this can be changed by the property owner.

The contract process begins once the unit passes inspection. The housing authority requests that the Veteran and property owner sign a lease with a move-in date. Staff confirm the affordability of the unit, the utility allowance, and inspection results and establish terms of tenancy before reviewing and approving the lease. When information is verified and data entry is completed, the housing authority sends the HAP contract based on the established terms of tenancy via email or regular mail; the property owner may also sign the contract at the housing authority. Once contracts are returned, staff will release the rent payment to the owner.

PORTS

Should a Veteran ask to port to another housing authority, the Veteran must first request approval from his/her VA case manager. If approved, the VA case manager will submit a letter to the housing authority approving the port, and the Veteran will complete and submit a Request to Transfer form. If needed, staff will provide additional time on the voucher to allow the Veteran to locate a unit in the new jurisdiction. HACoLA staff forward a copy of the Veteran's file to the receiving housing authority.

If a Veteran ports from another housing authority to HACoLA, HACoLA's portability staff will issue a voucher to the Veteran within 10 days of receiving the file. Once the voucher is issued, staff will monitor the file and process the new HAP contract if the Veteran locates a suitable housing unit. The Veteran's voucher time is subject to the number of days remaining on the voucher the Veteran received from the originating housing authority.

REEXAMINATIONS

HACoLA processes decreases in income as soon as they are reported and verified, with changes to rent going into effect the following month. Increases in income are acknowledged as they are reported but changes to the rent do not go into effect until the annual recertification.

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

Recertifications are completed annually. If a Veteran does not initially comply with the recertification, the HACoLA staff will reach out to the VA case manager and request that the Veteran receive assistance filling out the packet and providing the required verifications. HACoLA has found that some Veterans are no longer eligible for rental assistance during recertification. When this is the case, the housing authority still completes the recertification and terminates payments to the property owner. However, Veterans are able to stay on the program

for six months; if they experience changes to income or eligibility during that period, they may report it and the housing authority can recommence payments. If not, the Veteran no longer qualifies for the program.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exiters

HACoLA identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have obtained a housing unit:

- Increases in income—Veterans who are over-income can remain on the program for six months; if they remain over-income, they are no longer eligible for assistance.
- Lease violations—Some Veterans do not comply with the lease agreement or program rules. In these cases, HACoLA staff will contact the Veterans via letter and inform them that they are in violation of the obligations and outline the specific violations. The Veteran has 15 days to respond; HACoLA will schedule a meeting with the Veteran to resolve the violations.
- Evictions—Veterans who are evicted from their unit may stay in HUD-VASH; they can be issued a new voucher and complete the housing search again.
- Noncompliance with annual recertification—Veterans will often complete the first annual recertification but then fail to complete the packet or comply with mandatory verifications during subsequent recertifications.
- Withdrawal—Veterans may be no longer interested in remaining in the program.
- Nonpayment of rent
- Unit abandonment
- Death

Nonleased Exiters

HACoLA identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Privacy concerns—Veterans do not want to provide all of the detailed information required for the HUD-VASH application.
- Personal history—Veterans with histories of eviction may not be able to find units that will accept them.
- Challenging process—Veterans lose interest in the program because they get frustrated with the paperwork and housing search; they may feel that HUD-VASH is too much work.
- Difficulty finding acceptable housing—It can be hard for Veterans to locate affordable units. There are also times when Veterans find a unit within the rental guidelines but the rent comparables do not support the rent. If the property owner is not willing to negotiate on the rent, Veterans must find another housing unit.

- Transitions from homelessness—Some Veterans, particularly those with a history of chronic homelessness, have a difficult time transitioning from the “homeless way of life” and experience fear of the responsibility of obtaining housing and then readjusting to homelessness if they lose the housing.
- Transportation—Many Veterans lack transportation for the housing search.
- Health issues—It can be difficult to search for housing if the Veteran is ill or hospitalized.

VETERANS IN CRISIS

When Veterans experience housing issues, HACoLA staff will engage VA case managers but are more likely to work with Veterans and property owners directly.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

HACoLA and the VA have weekly conference calls and HACoLA staff may have more frequent contact with individual VA case managers if issues arise for particular Veterans. HACoLA also holds Task Force meetings on an as-needed basis to address specific processes. These meetings may take place once or on a monthly basis, depending on the concern, allowing the housing authority and VA to reevaluate and streamline processes and reduce the administrative burden of the program on a continuous basis. Community work groups are also commonplace, providing an opportunity for HACoLA to collaborate with VA and other community providers.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

HACoLA identified a number of facilitators of housing sustainability for Veterans in the HUD-VASH program:

- Decreasing time to housing—Preparing Veterans for the housing search and decreasing process timelines has made it easier to get Veterans housed.
- Program flexibility—HACoLA is flexible on some of the regulatory requirements for HUD-VASH participants; eliminating or cutting back on processes makes the program easier to navigate and leads to greater success in housing Veterans.
- Streamlining application materials—HACoLA has worked with HACLA to create a uniform HUD-VASH application. Additional revisions are being completed. While supplemental forms may never be uniform due to individual requirements at each housing authority, streamlining the process has made it easier for VA case managers to complete applications.

BARRIERS FOR HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

Veterans in Los Angeles face a number of challenges to accessing and sustaining permanent housing, including the following:

- Housing affordability—Many property owners have higher rents than the market generally supports. Since the housing authority takes rent comparables into consideration for rent negotiations, the rent must be reflective of the market, but some property owners

refuse to negotiate. HACoLA is committed to creating more project-based vouchers to increase the city's affordable housing stock.

- Location of affordable units—Many Veterans simply do not want to live in the areas that are affordable with the HUD-VASH vouchers. Additionally, Veterans who use the VA for medical services prefer to be located near the VAMC where there is a lack of affordable housing; this is problematic, particularly for those who use public transportation.
- SUD—Veterans with SUD are more likely to abandon their units. They may also face losing their housing while in treatment. Veterans can stay out of their homes for 30 days for treatment but they often return to treatment soon after being discharged.
- Multiple points of contact—The housing authority believes some Veterans may feel that they do not have a consistent case manager because the HUD-VASH program has so many points of contact.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

HACoLA owes its success to being open-minded and fluid. The housing authority strives to learn about the latest policies and regulations and work with federal and local partners to improve its programs, whether by addressing specific Veteran needs or involving the community.

HACoLA believes that offering additional wrap-around services for Veterans is important and suggests completing more frequent assessments and reassessments as Veterans' needs change. The housing authority indicated that more frequent check-ins with Veterans and assistance helping them communicate with property owners would be useful for those with housing issues. In addition, HACoLA would like the VA to hire more housing locators; if the housing success rate of Veterans can be increased, the housing authority will be able to maximize lease-ups. Currently, the housing authority has a 70% success rate with lease-up. Veterans would also benefit if additional funds were available for move-in. Accessing funds for security deposits and move-in costs can be difficult.

The housing authority would like to improve various aspects of the housing process. HACoLA indicated that the definition of "chronically homeless" has made it difficult to serve the large homeless population in Los Angeles. In effect, Veterans may be told that they are not "homeless enough" to meet program eligibility requirements. However, particularly for Veterans with children, meeting the federal definition may not be in the best interest of their family. If Veterans stay in a shelter they may be separated from their children, depending on the children's age. Similarly, families cannot stay in parks or cars as the Department of Children and Family Services will remove the children.

Some HUD guidelines can also make the housing process more difficult. For example, HUD requires that income verification documents must have been issued within 60 days of the voucher release date. Veterans may provide current documents when they initially enroll in HUD-VASH, but by the time a voucher is issued, they are no longer up to date. It would be useful if the guidelines could be adjusted to record the date that the income verification documents are received independent of the time of voucher issuance.

The housing authority is in the process of organizing a property owner service fair. HACoLA anticipates inviting all property owners currently involved with the housing authority to set up a booth at either the housing authority or VAMC to advertise their housing to voucher holders. Depending on the success of the initial fair, the housing authority would consider hosting this event bimonthly.

Step-By-Step Processes

The following chart summarizes the steps in the process of housing Veterans in HUD-VASH—from initial referral to the program to moving into the housing unit—as well as the roles of the VA case managers and housing authorities.

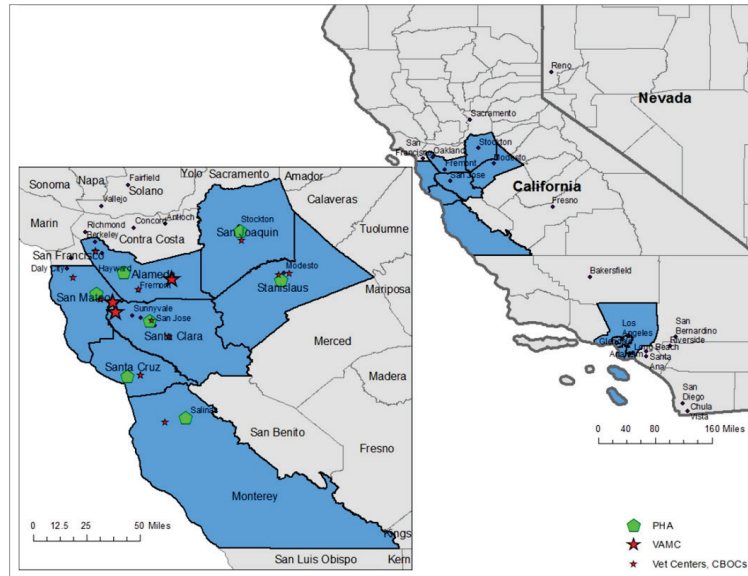
VA Case Management	Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA)
Referral & Admission		
<p>Referral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral source completes referral form, including Veteran's neighborhood preference. Referrals can be submitted by fax through a secure line from the community or by encrypted email from other VA providers (e.g., GPD Liaisons). 		
<p>Referral Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two VA intake workers process referral forms daily, check Veteran's homeless status in CPRS and HOMES, and ensure Veteran meets eligibility requirements. 		
<p>VA Case Manager Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA intake worker assigns Veteran to a SPA and consults with VA SPA supervisor on VA case manager assignment. VA intake worker assigns VA case manager and notifies him/her of assigned Veteran by email. 		
<p>Screening Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager contacts Veteran to schedule an in-person screening appointment to review eligibility and discuss program requirements. VA case manager reviews medical record and HOMES assessment, completes missing data, and discusses mandatory case management with Veteran. 		
<p>Veteran Enrollment In Va Case Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If eligible, Veteran is admitted to HUD-VASH case management. VA case manager assists with compiling all necessary identification and income documentation to submit with voucher application. Veteran is assigned to a HUD-VASH application appointment for assistance completing voucher application. 		

VA Case Management	Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA)
Voucher Application & Briefing		
<p>Voucher Application Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HUD-VASH staff assist Veteran in completing voucher application. 		
<p>Voucher Application Submitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HUD-VASH staff submit completed voucher application and required documents to housing authority at time of eligibility interview. 		
	<p>Eligibility Interview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACLA reviews application and interviews Veteran on Thursdays at HACLA office; if all information and signatures are in order, HACLA interviewer invites Veteran to voucher briefing the following Friday. 	<p>Eligibility Interview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACoLA reviews application and interviews Veteran on Thursdays at VAMC. Applications can be emailed or faxed to HACoLA and reviewed prior to meeting with Veteran at voucher briefing. Veteran invited to attend voucher briefing 1-2 weeks after submitting application. HACoLA informs HUD-VASH case managers via email when Veteran is assigned to a voucher issuance session.
	<p>Eligibility Verification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACLA completes sex offender check and confirms Veteran eligibility. 	<p>Eligibility Verification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACoLA completes sex offender check and confirms Veteran eligibility.
	<p>Voucher Briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voucher briefings held Fridays at HACLA office. 	<p>Voucher Briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voucher briefings held Thursdays at VAMC.
Housing Search		
<p>Weekly Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA peer support specialist offers optional weekly Housing Readiness Group to assist Veterans with housing search. 		
<p>RFTA Submission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veteran or VA case manager submits RFTA to housing authority. 	<p>RFTA Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACLA offers walk-in hours daily (8-11 am, 1-3 pm) where RFTA can be submitted or it can be faxed or e-mailed. 	<p>RFTA Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans or HUD-VASH staff can submit RFTA to HACoLA offices in-person Monday-Friday.
Inspection & Rent Negotiation		
	<p>Inspection Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACLA eligibility interviewer contacts property owner to schedule inspection within 2 days of RFTA submission; inspection scheduled for 3 days from date of contact. 	<p>Rent Negotiation & Inspection Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACoLA determines rent offer. HACoLA contacts property owner to negotiate rent. HACoLA schedules inspection, typically within 10 days.
	<p>File Updated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACLA eligibility interviewer updates file, including property ownership and internal rent comparables. 	<p>Inspection</p>

VA Case Management	Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA)
	<p style="text-align: center;">Inspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HACLA inspector completes inspection and uploads results into HACLA system. ▪ Inspection clerk uploads comparables into system. ▪ Inspection results and comparables are available to the eligibility interviewer within 3 days of inspection. Once obtained, the eligibility interviewer forwards file to contractor. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Reinspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If unit fails inspection, HACoLA inspector schedules reinspection while at the property
	<p style="text-align: center;">Reinspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If unit fails inspection, HACLA inspection department contacts property owner to schedule reinspection, allowing for any repairs/deficiencies to be address by owner. ▪ When failed results are viewed, the eligibility interviewer calls owner and schedules reinspection. Owner will dictate when the reinspection can take place. 	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Rent Offers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HACLA eligibility interviewer contractor determines rent offer and contacts property owner to negotiate rent and start date of the lease. ▪ HACLA eligibility interviewer contractor contacts Veteran to inform that s/he should meet with owner to sign lease. 	
HAP Contract & Lease		
	<p style="text-align: center;">Lease Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Property owner sends HACLA eligibility interviewer lease for review. ▪ HACLA eligibility interviewer approves lease. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Execution of Lease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HACoLA asks Veteran and property owner to sign lease with move-in date.
	<p style="text-align: center;">Execution of HAP Contract & Lease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Veteran signs lease with property owner and submits a copy of the lease to HACLA. ▪ HACLA draws up HAP contract once lease is received from property owner. ▪ Contracting eligibility interviewer generates HAP contract and mails it to the owner for signatures. ▪ HACLA receives signed HAP contract and processes it for payment. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Lease Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HACoLA reviews lease and drafts HAP contract.
		<p style="text-align: center;">Execution of HAP Contract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HACoLA schedules inspection once HAP contract is completed. If inspection passes, Veteran is able to sign lease that day and a copy is sent to Housing Authority.
Move-In		
<p style="text-align: center;">Move-In Assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Veterans may be referred to SSVF, if funds are available, or to other community agencies. AmVets assists with furniture, and offers free delivery, as well as vouchers for their thrift store and food, but requires 30 days or more for processing. 		

APPENDIX G: PALO ALTO SITE DESCRIPTION

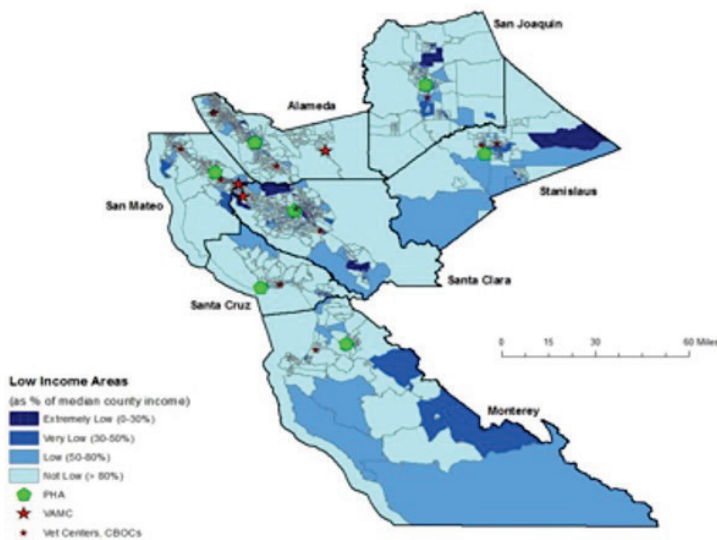
The Palo Alto HUD-VASH program operates in the following counties: Alameda, Monterey, San Mateo, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Stanislaus. The coordinating VA site is the VA Palo Alto Health Care System in Palo Alto, CA. The HUD-VASH program has 1,478 vouchers. The majority of vouchers are held by the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC, 740) and the Housing Authority of Monterey County (HACM, 199). HACSC serves Santa Clara County, including the urban area around Santa Jose. HACM serves Monterey County, the southernmost part of the Palo Alto catchment area, including Salinas and many coastal and rural areas.



Housing Context

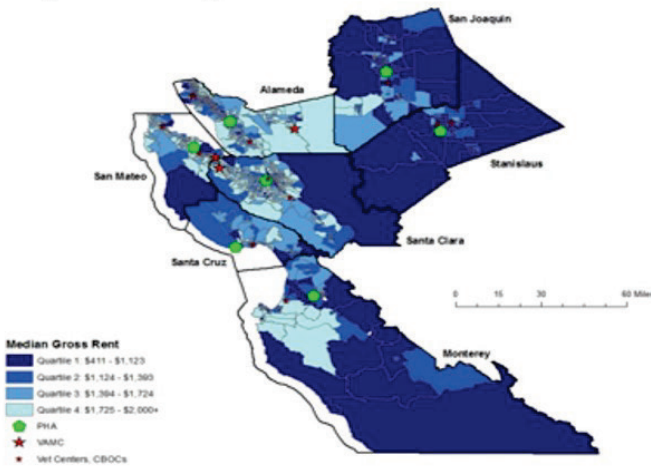
The following maps provide context for the housing markets in which Veterans participating in the Palo Alto HUD-VASH program conduct their housing search.

Map 1 Low income areas, Palo Alto



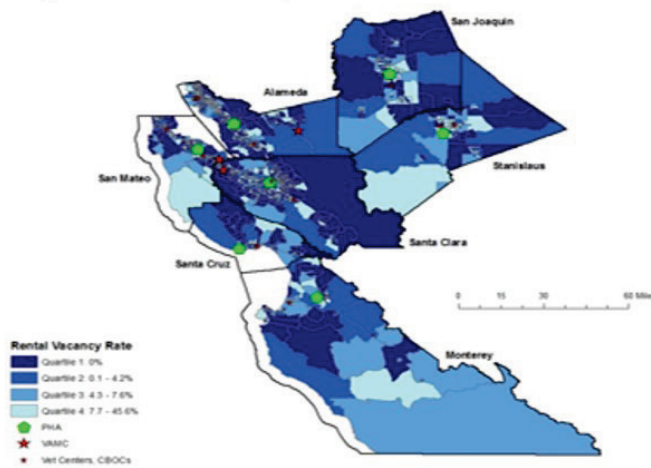
Map 1 outlines low, very low, and extremely low income areas based on median county income. There are few extremely low income areas in Palo Alto. Those that exist are near San Jose (near the intersection of Alameda and Santa Clara Counties), north of Sacramento (San Joaquin county), and the eastern section of Stanislaus County. Monterey County also has some lower income areas in the southern and eastern parts of the county. There is little overlap between VAMCs, other Vet Centers, and CBOCs or housing authorities and low income areas.

Map 2 Median gross rent, Palo Alto



Map 2 depicts median gross rent by quartile; the darkest areas have the lowest rent. The areas with the lowest median rent are typically in more rural areas, away from city centers. It is clear from this map that Alameda County and most areas in Santa Clara County have higher median rents.

Map 3 Rental vacancy rate, Palo Alto



Map 3 provides details on the rental vacancy rate by quartile. Darker areas have lower vacancy rates. The darkest shade in Palo Alto indicates a vacancy rate of zero, meaning there is essentially no available housing in these areas. Further, urban areas have low vacancy rates, while rural areas have more vacancies.

VA Case Management

The Palo Alto HUD-VASH staff includes supervisors, social workers, VA case managers, SUD specialists, housing specialists, peer support specialists, program support specialists, and a recreational therapist. The case load is 1:28. VA staff are divided among five teams at eight locations.

Team	Associated Housing Authority	Service Location	Team Composition
Central Valley	Alameda	Housing Authority of the County of Alameda (HACA)	Community and VAMC Fremont CBOC
	San Joaquin	Housing Authority of the County of San Joaquin (HACSJ)	Community and VAMC Stockton CBOC
	Stanislaus	Housing Authority of the County of Stanislaus (HACSTAN)	Community and VAMC Modesto CBOC
Menlo Park	Housing Authority of the County of San Mateo (HACSM)	Community and VAMC Menlo Park Campus	1 supervisor 8 VA case managers 1 housing specialist (shared with San Jose) 1 peer support specialist 2 program support specialists 1 SUD specialist (shared with San Jose) 1 recreational therapist (shared with San Jose)
San Jose	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC)	Community and VAMC San Jose CBOC	1 supervisor 7 VA case managers 1 housing specialist (shared with Menlo Park) 1 peer support (shared with Menlo Park) 1 SUD specialist (shared with Menlo Park) 1 recreational therapist (shared with Menlo Park)
Santa Cruz	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz (HACSCUZ)	Community and VAMC Capitola Clinic	1 supervisor 5 VA case managers 1 housing specialist (shared with Monterey) 1 peer support specialist 1 SUD specialist (shared with Monterey)
Monterey	Housing Authority of the County of Monterey (HACM)	Community and VAMC Monterey CBOC	1 supervisor 5 VA case managers 1 housing specialist (shared with Santa Cruz) 1 peer support specialist 1 SUD specialist (shared with Santa Cruz)

OUTREACH

Urban Region (Menlo Park & San Jose Teams)

In the urban areas around the Palo Alto VAMC, Veterans are referred to HUD-VASH by other facilities, including medical centers, the residential programs in Menlo Park, and the Homeless Veterans Rehabilitation Program (HVRP). Staff at the VA mental health clinics, emergency rooms, and other social workers refer Veterans to the program, including chronically homeless Veterans. Veterans may also receive referrals from homeless shelters, Health Care for Homeless

Veterans (HCHV) and Grant and Per Diem (GPD) programs in five sites around San Jose as well as other community-based organizations. Chronically homeless Veterans often self-refer to the program.

Veterans also learn about the HUD-VASH program through word of mouth. Additionally, they may attend a weekly housing resource group in Menlo Park and San Jose, which is designed to help any Veteran with a housing issue to access resources. Veterans learn about this group from the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans and from widely distributed flyers. Veterans who attend this group may request a referral to HUD-VASH.

Central Valley (Alameda, San Joaquin & Stanislaus Teams)

In the Central Valley, the HUD-VASH program receives referrals through weekly drop-in hours offered at HACSJ where staff screen individuals for eligibility for HUD-VASH. They also receive referrals through GPD and local homeless shelters. The local Salvation Army also refers Veterans to HUD-VASH.

Coastal Region (Santa Cruz & Monterey Teams)

In the coastal areas south of Palo Alto, the VA case management team receives referrals from VA providers and social workers as well as community partners. Veterans in this area can also attend Housing Resource Groups: one group is offered weekly in Santa Cruz at the Veterans Center, and two are offered once a week in Monterey.

Doctors and HCHV programs in Santa Cruz often refer Veterans to HUD-VASH during drop-in harm reduction groups. Weekly events are also held in Santa Cruz at the Veterans Memorial Building. During these events Veterans access medical care through a VA medical mobile outreach unit, get food and supplies such as tents, and see a Veteran advocate and Veteran Service Officers. HUD-VASH staff are also on hand for outreach. Further outreach includes visits to areas with high rates of homelessness at least monthly.

REFERRALS AND ELIGIBILITY

Though each VA case management team may follow a different day-to-day agenda based on the vast variety of people, services, and locations included in the service area, there is a general procedure for referrals. A standard form is used to refer all Veterans within the Palo Alto service area to HUD-VASH, regardless of whether they are referred through social workers, a VA treatment program, residential program, or other community programs. The referral is designed to capture the Veteran's current housing status, homeless history, vulnerability, and income.

TARGETING

Because the demand for vouchers exceeds their supply, the VA teams maintain an interest list, with priority given to chronically homeless Veterans and those with the greatest number of case management needs. The VA teams also target vulnerable Veterans, including Veterans with low income and significant medical, mental health, and/or substance use issues, putting them at greatest risk for death on the street. The VA team uses a standard matrix, similar to the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix, which assesses risk level in the following domains: housing, basic needs, physical health, family/social issues, substance abuse, mental health, and finances.

Additionally, the VA teams pay special attention to female, elderly, disabled, OIF, OEF, OND Veterans as well as families.

Palo Alto defines chronic homelessness in accordance with the HEARTH Act definition; the criterion for a homeless occasion is at least 7 days.

REFERRAL AND ADMISSION

VA support staff add referral details to a spreadsheet, including Veterans' living area preference. All VA case managers can access this spreadsheet. Individual VA case management teams are responsible for screening Veterans who fall within their area of purview to determine each Veteran's level of homelessness and need. Each of the teams uses a standard screening template to verify the information contained in the referral form and prioritize their interest list. A standard matrix is used to determine which Veterans are most in need of VA case management.

Urban Region (Menlo Park & San Jose Teams)

The Menlo Park and San Jose teams offer rolling screenings and admissions to HUD-VASH. VA case managers rotate weekly to conduct screenings. If demand for vouchers among chronically homeless Veterans exceeds supply, the VA case management team consults the matrix to determine which Veterans should be invited to participate in HUD-VASH. VA case managers inform prioritized Veterans of the documents necessary to complete the voucher application and schedule an intake meeting to complete the initial HUD-VASH paperwork.

Central Valley (Alameda, San Joaquin & Stanislaus Teams)

In the Central Valley the VA case management teams conduct screenings in person. The screenings may be with an individual VA case manager or the entire VA team and are conducted during a weekly drop-in time, which is communicated to the community, housing authorities, and homeless Veterans. The steps involved after this screening differs depending on where the Veteran is interested in living and the housing authority affiliated with that area.

Coastal Region (Santa Cruz & Monterey Teams)

In Monterey, one VA case manager is responsible for all screenings, while in Santa Cruz, screenings are assigned among individual VA case managers. After the Veteran verifies the information on the referral form and is deemed eligible, s/he is either invited to attend an admission group where initial HUD-VASH paperwork is completed or is added to the interest list and contacted by a VA case manager when a voucher is available. If a Veteran is unable to join the admission group, individual processing can be completed.

VOUCHER APPLICATION

Urban Region (Menlo Park & San Jose Teams)

Veterans in Menlo Park and San Jose must attend a group or individual orientation that lasts one to two hours. The orientation covers the HUD-VASH program basics, FAQs, and support services that are available, such as transportation. Veterans sign a program agreement and are assisted with completing the voucher application. Voucher applications vary by housing

authority. A VA case manager or other HUD-VASH staff submits the application directly to the housing authority, usually through fax or email.

When the application is accepted, the housing authority schedules a voucher briefing with the Veteran. Originally, HACSM scheduled two meetings with Veterans—one to complete the application materials and one for the voucher briefing—but VA staff are working with the housing authority to limit this contact to one meeting. HACSC holds one meeting with Veterans for the voucher briefing.

Central Valley (Alameda, San Joaquin & Stanislaus Teams)

Once a Veteran is admitted to HUD-VASH in the Central Valley, the application process varies for each housing authority.

Alameda

The VA case management team gives Veterans a list of required documents during the in-person screening and schedules them for a HUD-VASH orientation. During the orientation the VA case manager provides an overview of the program and assists the Veteran with completing the voucher application. The VA case manager delivers the application in-person to HACA. The housing authority contacts the VA case manager about any missing paperwork or, once the application is processed, to set up a voucher briefing one to three weeks after the application is submitted. The voucher briefing includes an orientation, which the VA case manager usually attends with the Veteran. HACA does not expedite the application process for HUD-VASH applicants but they are flexible in assisting Veterans (e.g., allowing them to sign letters attesting to their identity in lieu of obtaining certain identifying documents).

San Joaquin

During the in-person screening, VA case managers provide Veterans with the voucher application and schedule a meeting for the following week to review the completed packet. The VA case manager ensures that the Veteran understands the program rules and has completed all application materials. The Veteran submits the application to HACSJ; VA case managers often walk over to the housing authority with the Veteran or follow-up to ensure the application has been submitted. The housing authority processes the application in one to three weeks; if they find any discrepancies, they will contact the Veteran and/or the VA case manager. HACSJ can be flexible and will not delay the voucher issuance if the Veteran is missing one piece of documentation. Instead, the housing authority will ask that the Veteran bring any missing documentation to the voucher briefing. Following the housing authority's review of the application, the Veteran attends a voucher briefing at HACSJ. HUD-VASH applicants are typically processed alongside other HCV applicants.

Stanislaus

The Veteran sets up an appointment with the HACSTAN; the VA case manager does not attend this meeting but the housing authority has a staff member dedicated to HUD-VASH. The housing authority informs the Veteran of the documentation necessary to bring to the meeting. During this meeting the housing authority offers an orientation to the program and assists the Veteran in completing the voucher application. If all the paperwork is in place, the Veteran may receive his/her voucher at that time, but it typically takes a week or less to receive the voucher. HACTSAN expedites HUD-VASH vouchers.

Coastal Region (Santa Cruz & Monterey Teams)

Both VA case management teams in the coastal region work with Veterans to complete the voucher application but processes differ across the VA case management teams and housing authorities.

Santa Cruz

VA case managers assist Veterans in completing the voucher application during a second meeting after an initial orientation. Since the voucher application used by HACSCRUZ is very extensive, the VA case manager provides the Veteran with one-on-one attention. When the application is complete, it is submitted to the housing authority and the Veteran schedules an initial appointment to review and verify the paperwork. Following this initial appointment, the Veteran schedules a voucher briefing with HACSCRUZ that includes an orientation about the housing authority's rules. The housing authority meetings are scheduled individually with a HACSCRUZ specialist, who is not specific to HUD-VASH. The assigned VA case manager assists the Veteran by arranging transportation and offering support.

Monterey

Veterans who work with the Monterey VA team are informed in advance of the group admission meeting what documentation is required for the voucher application. If the Veteran brings the required documents to this meeting, the VA case manager completes a pre-application for HUD-VASH and submits it to HACM. A VA case manager attends every HACM meeting with the Veterans; since VA case managers are assigned to attend this meeting on a rotating basis, this VA case manager may not be the Veteran's long-term VA case manager. This strategy ensures that Veterans are introduced to a number of VA case managers, though if a particular Veteran needs additional help, the assigned VA case manager will also attend. The housing authority meetings are held weekly at a set time with a HACM staff member specific to HUD-VASH.

HOUSING SEARCH

Urban Region (Menlo Park & San Jose Teams)

Both VA case management teams in the urban region share a VA housing specialist who is responsible for identifying properties and troubleshooting housing issues. A VA peer support specialist offers weekly start-up groups that cover housing issues such as credit and interview strategies. The curriculum rotates, and Veterans are required to attend at least four sessions to become well-versed in different areas. Both teams also offer ride-alongs three times per week, during which they visit units from the housing authority lists; online searches; cold phone calls; or information on units that the teams have learned about through word of mouth. The VA case managers also organize ride-alongs with a more narrow focus, such as senior housing or a certain number of rooms, to save Veterans time.

The Menlo Park and San Jose VA case management teams have relationships with property owners and property management companies that inform them in advance about open units. Some waive Veterans' application fees and are also flexible with credit and background checks, which the VA case managers particularly value. Although these units are often not the most desirable, these residences can serve as a last resort for Veterans who have had an eviction, credit issues, or felonies.

VA case managers describe the biggest housing issues for Veterans in the urban region as the tight housing market and amount of rent that the voucher will cover. The market is inhibiting lease-ups because there has been an increase in technological jobs in the area but not an increase in housing stock. Therefore, property owners often want more than the payment standard offered by the housing authorities. The housing authorities determine if the unit is worth more than the standard, but the Veteran is then expected to pay the additional portion on his/her own, which may not be possible. HACSM allows Veterans to pay up to 50% of their income, while HACSC allows Veterans to pay up to 40%.

Central Valley (Alameda, San Joaquin & Stanislaus Teams)

One VA housing specialist works across the Central Valley. The VA housing specialist finds units through online searches, relationships with property owners who notify the VA when units that can accept a voucher are open, and by talking to anyone with “Apartments for Lease” signs. The VA peer support specialist conducts weekly group ride-alongs to housing located by the VA housing specialist. The VA housing specialist also meets with Veterans weekly in San Joaquin County and calls to touch base with the Veterans in Alameda and Stanislaus Counties to share new listings. For the first 30 days following voucher issuance, Veterans are encouraged to take the initiative to determine what type of housing they want and where, and meet with property owners. After 30 days the VA case manager provides additional assistance.

The ability to secure affordable housing varies by area: it is easy to find housing in Modesto in Stanislaus County, a bit more difficult in San Joaquin County, and very difficult in Alameda County as the voucher is about \$550 per month less than the lowest rents. The cost of living has also increased there recently, but the voucher value has not changed. There is additional difficulty housing Veterans through the HACSJ because the VA case managers are unaware of how the voucher dollar amount is determined and there are large variations in the amounts generated for Veterans at the same income level. Other housing authorities offer standard amounts based on income level so Veterans can begin their housing search as soon as they have been accepted into the program, while Veterans housed through HACSJ must wait until the voucher amount is confirmed.

Coastal Region (Santa Cruz & Monterey Teams)

Monterey and Santa Cruz share a VA housing specialist who offers weekly startup groups designed to help Veterans prepare for their housing search by filling out a sample application, obtaining their credit reports, and identifying the type of unit they want. The VA housing specialist assigns homework to help Veterans begin their housing search. The VA housing specialist and VA peer support specialist offer weekly housing searches tailored to Veterans’ preferences. They visit property owners familiar with the program, units on the housing authority lists, Craigslist units, and units they hear about from individuals they have worked with in the past. These trips have been successful in getting Veterans housed, and particularly in helping Veterans to consider a wider range of locations and options. Individualized housing searches can be arranged for rural areas, Veterans who cannot handle groups, and other special circumstances. In this region, although Veterans are given an initial 120-day timeframe to find housing, they are encouraged to find housing within the first 60 days.

INSPECTION

Urban Region (Menlo Park & San Jose Teams)

As soon as the Veteran submits the RFTA the housing authority schedules an inspection, which occurs one to four weeks later. Units that take longer typically have not yet been vacated by a previous tenant, and inspections cannot be scheduled until the unit is empty. If the unit is available immediately the property owner can request that the housing authority prioritize the inspection and schedule it within a week. If a unit fails inspection, another week is usually added to the process. VA case managers request that the Veteran attend the inspection so that s/he can sign the lease immediately afterwards.

Central Valley (Alameda, San Joaquin & Stanislaus Teams)

The Central Valley VA case management teams have discussed deputizing the VA housing specialist in San Joaquin County to complete inspections. Currently, only the housing authorities are completing the inspections, which can take from one day to a week with HACSTAN, one to two weeks with HACA, and up to four weeks with HACSJ. Housing authority staffing issues can hinder the completion of inspections in a timely manner. Specifically, housing authorities with few staff do not have coverage if an inspector is out; at housing authorities with multiple inspectors, the inspector completing a reinspection may notice an issue the first inspector did not. These problems complicate the inspection process and can prolong the housing process.

Coastal Region (Santa Cruz & Monterey Teams)

Preinspections are rare, although they sometimes occur at senior housing complexes where an inspector can evaluate multiple units at once. The standard procedure is for the unit to be inspected following the submission of the RFTA, typically within seven to 10 days and can be expedited if necessary. Property owners who would like to expedite the inspection contact the housing authorities directly. If a unit requires a reinspection, it is usually completed within one or two days of the property owner confirming the repairs have been made. Inspectors at the HACM usually give the unit a passing grade unless it is dangerous or unlivable. However, the inspectors recommend repairs to units that have passed inspection, which the property owners must complete. Veterans can move in the day their units pass inspection.

MOVE-IN

All VA case management teams rely on local SSVF programs and other community organizations and government agencies for move-in assistance. Some Veterans can afford to pay the deposits on their own, usually because of back pay on benefits or Social Security.

Each of the VA teams described the difficulty of finding a consistent source for furniture, especially beds, as well as transportation to deliver furniture. The Coastal Region VA teams obtain beds from the Veteran Resource Center, which purchases them in bulk, and household items from the local GPD program. Additionally, a local facility has a large warehouse and invites graduates from Veterans Transitional Center in Monterey to take any items that they may need. The Veterans Transitional Center is a community-based agency that provides Veterans with transitional housing, emergency services, and case management. VA case managers have also been known to fill their cars with donations from the local community.

VA CASE MANAGEMENT

The following table describes VA case management requirements:

During housing process	Weekly face-to-face meeting
Year 1	Minimum monthly home visits, more as needed based on acuity
Year 2+	Minimum monthly home visits, more as needed based on acuity

Urban Region (Menlo Park & San Jose Teams)

Veterans are assigned a VA case manager when they enroll in HUD-VASH, usually the case manager who completed the Veteran’s admission. Veterans who enroll through a group admission are quickly assigned individual case managers. During the housing process, case managers check in with Veterans at least weekly, preferably in person, and by telephone if necessary. The teams also conduct monthly in-person check-ins with unhoused Veterans. The VA case management teams provide a group where Veterans can discuss and address their housing barriers with case managers and other Veterans, renew motivation for the housing search, and be reminded that they have a finite amount of time to find a unit. After Veterans are housed, most meetings take place in the Veterans’ homes, typically on a monthly basis, unless more frequent visits are needed.

Central Valley (Alameda, San Joaquin & Stanislaus Teams)

Veterans must meet with their VA case managers face-to-face once a week during the housing process. Veterans may attend a weekly Housing Resource Group meeting—in lieu of a VA case management meeting—with a VA housing specialist, VA SUD specialists, and the VA case management team. Veterans who have been housed typically meet with their VA case managers monthly in their homes but they may also meet at the case manager’s office or attend community meetings led by one of the VA SUD specialists. All VA case management teams also assist Veterans during the annual recertification process.

In San Joaquin, attendance at weekly advanced group meetings is required for Veterans who are not yet housed. These meetings, led by VA case managers with assistance from VA peer support specialists, address topics such as anger management, budgeting, goal setting, and other basic life skills. After Veterans are housed their attendance is no longer required, but many Veterans continue to participate to learn new skills and socialize with other Veterans.

In Stanislaus, VA SUD specialists also build rapport with GPD participants, as those Veterans often transition to the HUD-VASH program.

Coastal Region (Santa Cruz & Monterey Teams)

The Santa Cruz VA case management team has office space but is based primarily in the field and tends to meet with Veterans in the community, typically at the Veterans Memorial Building. The Monterey VA case management team operates out of the VA clinic in Monterey, which serves as the center of the HUD-VASH program.

VA case managers hold weekly VA case management meetings when a Veteran is in the early stages of the program; however, the frequency of meetings decreases over time. Before a Veteran is housed, s/he must meet with his/her VA case manager a minimum of once a month, but VA case managers will maintain the frequency at once a week if needed. VA case managers connect Veterans to appropriate healthcare services and other necessities. Sobriety is not a program requirement, but Santa Cruz VA case managers inform Veterans of harm reduction groups in the community and the Monterey VA case management team offers SUD groups. The Santa Cruz VA case managers also hold a monthly group meeting for all Veterans where they provide snacks and coffee, discuss resources, and socialize. Attendance is encouraged, especially for new members of the program who have the opportunity to speak to peers who have successfully found and maintained housing.

The Palo Alto teams utilize the following evidence-based practices: Assertive Community Treatment, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Harm Reduction, Motivational Interviewing, Twelve Step Facilitation, Peer Support/Mentoring, Supported Employment, and Housing First.

PORTS

Porting within the housing authorities in the Palo Alto service area is much easier than porting to an outside location covered by a different VA case management team. However, porting is rare given the large catchment areas covered by the housing authorities.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exiters

The VA case management teams identified a number of reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Incarceration—If the incarceration is short-term, the VA case management teams will work with the Veteran, but if the Veteran is incarcerated for a longer period of time, the program must discharge the Veteran.
- Readiness—Successful housing is related to a Veteran’s motivation and comfort living alone in an unstructured environment. After leasing housing, Veterans may realize that they want or need a higher level of support, particularly those with medical or mental health issues or active SUD. Not being able to maintain housing is not always considered a failure because each Veteran needs to be in the right place at the right time. Though atypical across housing authorities in the service area, HACSJ is very flexible with Veterans who are away from their housing for mental health treatment, allowing Veterans to seek treatment for up to six months, at which point they may be ready to live independently.
- Withdrawal—Veterans may move, opt out of the program, seek a residential assistance program or rehabilitation, or are no longer interested in participating in HUD-VASH.
- Loss of contact
- Increases in income
- Death

Nonleased Exiters

The VA case management teams identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Increases in income—If a Veteran becomes over-income, s/he is no longer eligible for rental assistance.
- Challenging process—Veterans may be overwhelmed by the paperwork and bureaucracy involved in enrolling in the program and finding housing. Chronically homeless Veterans, some of whom have been living on the streets for 10 to 20 years, can become easily overwhelmed by the program requirements.
- Loss of contact—Veterans' vouchers often expire if the VA case managers cannot locate the Veterans.
- Personal history—Veterans may encounter multiple housing application rejections based on bad credit or other background characteristics and become discouraged.
- Serious mental illness and SUD—Veterans with mental and behavioral health issues are often difficult to track and maintain in the program.
- Motivation—Veterans may not be motivated to do what it takes to get housing but do not want to sacrifice the voucher.
- Incarceration

VETERANS IN CRISIS

VA case managers attempt to get a signed release of information with everyone in close contact with Veterans, including property owners, the housing authority, family members, and clinicians. This allows VA case managers to learn about crises from these individuals and assist Veterans. Other HUD-VASH Veterans may also indicate that a fellow Veteran is having issues, but Veterans and VA case managers must handle these admissions with care because of confidentiality rules.

VA case managers described many of the housing authorities as being flexible for Veterans with housing issues, often granting them additional time to address problems. Housing authorities avoid evictions if at all possible, and most have never had to deal with evictions among Veterans in HUD-VASH. For example, HACSJ tries to avoid eviction by working with the property owner and discussing with the Veteran the availability of additional services or a representative payee.

GRADUATION

A Veteran may graduate from HUD-VASH case management after one year of successful independent living, agreement between the Veteran and the case manager that the Veteran has met his/her goals, and the Veteran no longer requires HUD-VASH case management services to maintain independent housing. Veterans who graduate retain their HUD-VASH voucher and are not transferred to the regular HCV Program. Though regular VA case management contact ends at graduation, VA case management is still available if needed.

VA case managers throughout the Palo Alto service area stated that many Veterans are in need of long-term VA case management. The Central Valley teams pointed out that graduation is not

necessarily their goal for most Veterans, because they understand that many Veterans in HUD-VASH may need VA case management to stay housed. This team admits that most of the chronically homeless Veterans need much more intensive VA case management, so they often do not graduate in a year, if at all. Serious mental health issues also make the VA case managers reluctant to stop VA case management. Finally, even those who appear ready for graduation may opt to retain VA case management.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

Urban Region (Menlo Park & San Jose Teams)

The VA case management teams working with HACSM and HACSC describe communication with the housing authorities as challenging. The VA case managers believe this stems directly from staff cuts at the housing authorities—they are trying to do more with fewer people. The housing authorities no longer update the VA case managers as routinely because they seem administratively overwhelmed.

San Mateo

HACSM prefers that VA case managers attend pre-voucher meetings with Veterans. However, the scheduled meeting time is often unclear or during a time that the VA case manager is unavailable. The gaps in communication about scheduling have made it difficult for VA case managers to assist Veterans.

Santa Clara

VA case managers have a phone meeting with HACSC every Wednesday morning to review issues and answer questions. They also have quarterly in-person meetings. VA case managers feel that it is still difficult for the housing authority to keep up with communications regarding all of their cases due to the large size of the program.

Central Valley (Alameda, San Joaquin & Stanislaus Teams)

The supervisor meets with each of the housing authorities quarterly, but they usually communicate more frequently. The increase in frequency is especially true recently, because the housing authorities are applying for project-based allocations.

Alameda

The VA case management team does not have scheduled appointments with HACA but VA case managers have one point of contact at the housing authority and can reach out for assistance if needed; the housing authority is very responsive. Likewise, the housing authority can always get in touch with VA case managers.

San Joaquin

VA case managers collocate at HACSJ every Tuesday from 9 am to 11 am and hold meetings with Veterans in their building. This has created a very supportive relationship with HACSJ staff, and VA case managers have access to them any day of the week.

Stanislaus

VA case managers meet with HACSTAN several times per week. Communication is less frequent when all Veterans are housed. Overall, the VA case managers described having a very good relationship with the housing authority.

Coastal Region (Santa Cruz & Monterey Teams)

Santa Cruz

The VA case managers communicate with the HACSCUZ on a biweekly basis.

Monterey

The Monterey VA case management team and HACM hold quarterly meetings. VA case managers indicate that these meetings have improved efficiency and communication, even if they have not sped up the housing process. One challenge cited by the VA case managers is a lack of communication following a Veteran's RFTA submission. Though the housing authority usually responds to the request within two weeks, the VA case managers do not hear from the housing authority until the inspection, which can be frustrating for the Veteran and property owner.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

The Palo Alto VA case management team identified a number of facilitators of housing sustainability for Veterans in the HUD-VASH program:

- **Organization**—The Daily Management System, a Lean Management organizational model recently implemented at the Palo Alto VA, has helped them better organize their program and increase teamwork. Daily huddles allow the team to share resources.
- **Specialized staff**—The increase in support for VA case managers through specialized roles, such as VA peer support, VA SUD specialist, and VA housing specialists, has allowed VA case managers to better serve the Veterans on their large case loads. It has also enabled the program to access more resources and build better relationships in the community.
- **Housing sustainability focus**—The teams also credit their success to their focus on housing sustainability. They work with each Veteran individually to better target each person's needs. Motivational Interviewing has been effective in helping Veterans believe that they can be housed. Additionally, Veterans who have been discharged from the program and have lost their vouchers are placed back on the interest list so they can return to the program when they are ready. The VA case managers understand that some Veterans may need multiple chances.
- **Groups**—Many of the activities that the VA case management teams offer help Veterans get and stay housed. Through group housing searches VA case managers and Veterans are able to meet each other and share stories and advice. Likewise, housing groups allow unhoused Veterans to discuss their barriers and learn from each other.
- **Connection to resources**—Community resources are key to the Palo Alto HUD-VASH program. Community-based organizations are integral to every step of HUD-VASH, from identifying homeless Veterans through outreach efforts, to providing medical and transportation services and financial move-in assistance.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

Veterans in the Palo Alto region face a number of challenges to accessing and sustaining permanent housing, including the following:

- Lack of affordable housing—There is a shortage of available housing across the region served by the Palo Alto VAMC, as well as a lack of property owners willing to accept HCVs, given that the housing authority payment standards do not reflect the market value of area rentals. The technology industry continues to create jobs in the area but there is insufficient housing to meet the demand, and the demand for housing has effectively priced low income earners out of the market. While rent continues to rise, there is no plan to increase the already low level of the housing authority payment standards. In practice, this translates to VA case managers encouraging Veterans to accept any unit they can find and get on a waiting list for a complex that accepts HCVs so they can move into a better unit in the future. Those who are unable to find a unit in the tight housing market may give up.
- Financial issues—Lack of funding for move-in assistance is a challenge in Palo Alto. While a Veteran with no income can be approved for HUD-VASH, community partners, including SSVF, are not required to provide move-in assistance. Since a Veteran with zero income cannot prove that s/he can sustain payments, many organizations do not want to provide move-in assistance.
- Motivation—Ambivalence on the part of the Veteran is a significant hurdle to overcome. VA case managers stated that Veterans express disbelief that they will be able to access housing and are therefore only willing to make a minimal commitment to the program.
- Readiness—Some Veterans may not be ready for independent housing or may not be able to afford it. VA case managers indicated that, given their Housing First approach, they are not working on housing readiness issues. As they enroll more chronically homeless Veterans, this becomes an increasing challenge.
- Personal history—Veterans with poor credit scores often have difficulty finding a property owner who will rent to them. Veterans who are frequently denied housing due to their background may become discouraged by the process.
- VA program regulations—The VA case management teams said that HUD-VASH can seem mechanized given all of the paperwork and data entry VA case managers are expected to complete. It can become difficult to balance the clinical side of the VA case management with the rules, regulations, and expectations of the program.
- Staffing concerns—Finding qualified staff can be an issue, particularly because the cost of living in the service area is so high; as a result, teams are often understaffed.
- Mental illness
- SUD

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The Palo Alto VA case management teams had many concerns related to funding. First, the VA teams would like to see SSVF expand to all counties in the service area. Additionally, the VA teams would like the allocations to be larger for SSVF so these agencies do not run the risk of expending all of the assistance available for Veterans in HUD-VASH. It would also be helpful if SSVF funds could be used for application fees, particularly for Veterans with zero income or no savings.

The teams also recommended a cost of living allowance for expensive housing markets, such as Alameda, as they are struggling to house Veterans in these expensive areas. Furthermore, they suggested having each voucher allocation come with a set amount of funds to be used for move-in expenses, ideally an amount equal to the area’s median rent.

In areas where it can take a long time to schedule inspections, such as San Joaquin County, it would be helpful if VA housing specialists could conduct inspections. In some areas, it is estimated that this could cut three to four weeks off of the lease-up time.

VA case management teams reiterated the benefit of Motivational Interviewing. They said it has been useful for important issues ranging from substance abuse to housing to Veteran ambivalence. VA teams suggested further training to enable VA case managers to become more proficient with this technique.

Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara

HACSC has four staff who work with HUD-VASH Veterans: a housing programs manager, two intake specialists, and two housing specialists. Details on HACSC’s voucher issuance and payment standards are shown in the table below:

Payment Standard	None specified
Portion of Rent that is Veteran’s Responsibility	35%
Initial Voucher Issuance Period	120 days

Veterans are served by HACSC staff at the housing authority. HACSC prioritizes HUD-VASH and codes the applicant files so that so that all workers, from clerks to inspectors, are aware of their priority status. HACSC has been designated by Congress as a HUD Moving to Work (MTW) Agency, which provides them with flexibility to modify certain HUD regulations to streamline their programs.

VOUCHER APPLICATION

HACSC has a designated email/fax inbox for HUD-VASH referrals. VA case management teams submit applications through this mechanism and the HACSC housing programs manager forwards them to the assigned specialist within the housing authority. After reviewing the file and ensuring that the Veteran meets program eligibility criteria, the specialist contacts the applicant and VA case manager to schedule an intake and inform them whether additional documents are needed. During the intake meeting, the HACSC specialist reviews the materials with the Veteran and VA case manager.

HACSC offers VA case managers trainings so that they can complete most of the voucher application in advance of the intake meeting. During the trainings, the housing authority guides VA case managers through the HACSC process, including filling out the application, reviewing the materials, determining eligibility, and explaining income limits, criminal and other background information, and qualifying and disqualifying criteria. Thanks to these efforts, the application packet is usually complete when it reaches the housing authority.

VOUCHER BRIEFING

The Veteran is scheduled for a voucher briefing after the intake meeting. Although the briefing is a separate appointment from the intake meeting, it is usually scheduled for the same day. Typically, the VA case manager attends this meeting with the Veteran. During the briefing, HACSC staff provide the Veteran with additional housing information, the voucher, and RFTA materials. Voucher briefings usually take place with a group of Veterans.

HOUSING SEARCH

The housing search is generally the responsibility of the Veteran and the VA case management team. However, HACSC provides HCV listings and online resources to the Veteran and shares information about available properties with the VA housing specialist. Once the Veteran finds a property s/he is interested in renting, the property owner completes the RFTA. Usually, the VA case manager or Veteran, or sometimes the property owner, submits the completed documents to the HACSC leasing team. An HACSC inspector reviews the documents to determine the affordability of the rent, review the property ownership, and evaluate rent comparables. Once this review is complete, a HACSC clerk contacts the property owner to schedule an inspection. Since HACSC is a MTW site, they have modified the amount of rent for which clients are responsible; HUD-VASH participants must cover 35% of the rent.

INSPECTION

It generally takes about three days from submission of the RFTA to the inspection. A HACSC clerk emails the VA case manager regarding the scheduled inspection time. If a unit passed inspection within the last 30 days but was not rented, HACSC will accept the prior inspection; however, if it has been more than 30 days, the unit has to be reinspected.

HAP CONTRACT AND LEASE

All contract negotiations occur at the time of inspection. It is preferred that the VA case manager and Veteran attend the inspection because the HAP contract and lease can be executed as soon as the unit passes inspection and the Veteran can arrange for immediate move-in.

PORTS

The VA case manager coordinates ports with the receiving VA and housing authority to ensure that there is a HUD-VASH program through which the Veteran can receive case management.

REEXAMINATIONS

The housing authority has streamlined the reexamination process using their status as a MTW agency. If a Veteran receives an increase in income between regularly scheduled recertifications, the increase is not processed until the next recertification. Decreases are processed immediately, with changes going into effect the following month.

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

Due to the housing authority's MTW designation, the HACSC has opted not to conduct recertifications on an annual basis but on a bi-annual or tri-annual basis. If a Veteran household has wages or income that are not fixed, HACSC will re-examine the household every two years.

If a Veteran household has a fixed income, the reexamination will only take place every three years as these households are unlikely to have an income change.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exiters

HACSC identified a number of reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Transition from homelessness—Veterans who enter housing directly from the streets may find it difficult to set up their home: they do not have pots or pans or furniture and are not accustomed to paying rent, buying groceries, cooking, or interacting with neighbors.
- Zero income—All Veterans in HUD-VASH are responsible for paying a portion of their rent. When utilities are not included with the rent, Veterans who do not have an income often have difficulty making these payments.
- Substance abuse—Veterans with active drug or alcohol problems may spend much of their income on these substances rather than paying their rent, jeopardizing their housing.
- Noncompliance with VA case management—HACSC learns from VA case managers that Veterans are not compliant with VA case management and will terminate them from the program to open the voucher for another Veteran.
- Lease violations—Some Veterans have difficulty following the lease agreement and abiding by rules. Often, these Veterans invite unauthorized people into the household, which is grounds for termination.
- Unit abandonment—Sometimes Veterans leave their HUD-VASH units without informing their VA case manager or the housing authority.
- Death

Nonleased Exiters

HACSC identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Lack of affordable housing—The vacancy rate in the area is very low, making it difficult to find affordable units. HACSC tries to recruit more property owners to identify available and affordable units for program participants.
- Personal history—Veterans who have poor credit, a criminal background, or a history of homelessness frequently find it more difficult to locate a unit. Property owners often have choice in who they rent to, in part because of the low vacancy rate in the area, and they will select other applicants over these Veterans.
- Challenging process—Veterans can find the HUD-VASH process overwhelming due to the paperwork and steps involved.
- Loss of contact

- Incarceration
- Substance abuse

VETERANS IN CRISIS

HACSC usually learns from property owners that Veterans are experiencing housing issues. When the housing authority follows-up with VA case managers, they often find out that VA case managers are aware of the issues as well and have been working with the Veterans to resolve them. HACSC and VA case managers frequently work in tandem to assist Veterans in this area.

If a Veteran is not complying with housing rules, the housing authority usually counsels the Veteran with the VA case manager present. Because the Veteran is actively receiving VA case management, the housing authority generally does not terminate him/her. If the Veteran is not paying his/her portion of the rent and is evicted, HACSC will give the Veteran another voucher and an official warning indicating why the previous voucher was terminated and stating that if it happens again, the Veteran could lose the voucher indefinitely. The VA case manager works with the Veteran to prevent the situation from happening again (e.g., creating a budget with the Veteran or working with a payee to manage the Veteran's money). For Veterans with multiple violations, HACSC has created second and third levels of review before allowing them to continue in the program.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

HACSC operations staff and VA case managers meet weekly to discuss any scheduling, voucher extensions, noncompliance, terminations, or other challenges. VA case managers contact HACSC staff daily if an issue requires immediate attention. HACSC and the VA share updated rosters so that each team knows the correct point of contact for specific areas or clients. Larger team meetings that include management are also held quarterly to discuss broader policy issues.

Additionally, monthly meetings that involve both the housing authority and VA as well as community stake holders have been held since May 2013 following a rapid results acceleration boot camp. These meetings help to keep everyone engaged and ensure that the program is reaching prioritized Veterans and meeting target performance measures.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

- HACSC described facilitators that have made housing sustainability easier for Veterans:
- VA case management—Property owners are more understanding of Veterans in HUD-VASH and appreciate the VA case managers' involvement in mitigating problems.
- Communication with between VA and the housing authority
- HUD-VASH Boot Camp

BARRIERS TO HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

HACSC indicated several challenges for housing sustainability:

- Staffing issues—HACSC finds it difficult to make sure HUD-VASH applicants are processed as quickly as possible because there is insufficient staff dedicated to this population.

- Mental health issues—HACSC staff indicated that Veterans with mental health issues, such as PTSD, often have difficulty communicating and may become easily agitated. Although these Veterans are receiving services through VA, they may not be compliant with their treatment or refuse to follow-up with providers.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

HACSC stressed the importance of having an open dialogue with VA and community providers. In an effort to streamline procedures, the housing authority and VA staff mapped out the HUD-VASH processes and highlighted the barriers for both teams. They discussed ways to make the process more efficient, such as including a documents checklist to assist VA case managers with completing the voucher application. Both teams have also worked with homeless service providers to continue the discussion with a broader scope. One idea that came out of these meetings was setting aside money for flexible funds to be used for furniture or other move-in necessities not normally covered by housing rental assistance.

HACSC is working with the VA on a request for 25 project-based vouchers for HUD-VASH and has identified three potential sites if these vouchers are awarded.

Housing Authority of Monterey County

HACM has four staff dedicated to HUD-VASH, including two eligibility specialists who complete intake for all Veterans, and two senior housing program specialists with ongoing Veteran caseloads. Veterans are served by HACM staff at the housing authority. Details on HACM’s voucher issuance and payment standards are shown in the table below:

Payment Standard	General SRO - \$653 (100% FMR) 0BR - \$864 (99.25% FMR) 1BR - \$990 (101% FMR) 2BR - \$1,162 (94.2% FMR) 3BR - \$1,623 (90.15% FMR) 4BR - \$1,811 (90% FMR) 5BR - \$2,083 (90% FMR)	South County ^a SRO - \$588 (90% FMR) 0BR - \$784 (90% FMR) 1BR - \$882 (90% FMR) 2BR - \$1,111 (90% FMR) 3BR - \$1,620 (90% FMR) 4BR - \$1,811 (90% FMR) 5BR - \$2,083 (90% FMR)	Peninsula ^b SRO - \$679 (104%FMR) 0BR - \$899 (103.25% FMR) 1BR - \$1,020 (104.1% FMR) 2BR - \$1,186 (96.1%FMR) 3BR - \$1695 (94.15% FMR) 4BR - \$1,891 (94% FMR) 5BR - \$2,175 (94% FMR)
Portion of Rent that is Veteran’s Responsibility	30%, up to 40% including utilities		
Initial Voucher Issuance Period	120 days		

^a Chualar, Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield, King City, San Lucas, San Ardo, and Lockwood.

^b Big Sur, Carmel, Carmel Valley, Marina, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Sand City, and Seaside

VOUCHER APPLICATION

VA case managers assist Veterans with completing the voucher application, which is submitted to the HACM intake/eligibility specialist. The housing authority has trained VA case managers on how to complete the application and what supporting documents are needed; VA case managers will reach out to the housing authority with questions, ensuring that the applications are complete in advance of the eligibility interview. Eligibility interviews take place one to two weeks after the application is submitted and are held every Wednesday at the housing authority.

A VA case manager is present at this meeting, though it may not be the VA case manager assigned to the specific Veterans who are being interviewed.

VOUCHER BRIEFING

After HACM completes the sex offender check and income verification to confirm the Veteran's eligibility, the Veteran is scheduled for a group voucher briefing. The Veteran is informed of the meeting details via letter. At the briefing, Veterans watch a video that reviews the rules and regulations of the program. This is followed by a question and answer period and then Veterans receive their vouchers.

HOUSING SEARCH

The housing authority provides a list of units that accept HCVs to the VA housing specialist, who is the main point of contact for the housing search. Since this position was filled, HACM has seen an increase in the lease rate among Veterans. Previously, Veterans' vouchers would often expire or Veterans would struggle with high deposits that they could not afford. HACM sees the VA housing specialist as instrumental in getting Veterans leased-up.

The housing authority indicates that affordable housing is available within their service area. However, most of the affordable housing is in areas where Veterans do not want to live. The housing search is also impacted by seasonal workers who come to the area during the growing season. Veterans have an easier time finding a unit that they can afford in the fall than in the spring or summer.

INSPECTION

After the RFTA is submitted, an HACM inspector reviews the file. Based on the utilities specified by the property owner and the requested rent, the HACM inspector determines if the Veteran can afford the unit and whether s/he qualifies for it. HACM will deny a RFTA if the rent is too high and the property owner is not willing to negotiate or if the cost of utilities makes the Veteran's monthly payment over the approved amount, which is particularly an issue for Veterans with zero income. Additionally, property owners are less likely to negotiate on rent during the spring and summer months when the number of seasonal workers and potential tenants increases.

An inspection is generally scheduled within three to five days. However, it can take more time to get it completed due to the housing authority's large, rural service area. If repairs are needed, the housing authority assesses the property owner's willingness to do the work. If the property owner is unwilling to make the repairs, the Veteran is informed via letter and is given a new RFTA to continue the search. This rarely happens because the VA housing specialist advocates for the Veteran and encourages the property owner to make the repairs.

HAP CONTRACT AND LEASE

When the unit passes inspection the HAP contract between HACM and the property owner is signed onsite. The lease agreement between the owner and tenant is signed at a time decided by both parties.

PORTABILITY

For a Veteran to port his/her HUD-VASH voucher, the receiving housing authority can accept the Veteran into its HUD-VASH program, convert the Veteran's voucher into a HCV, or bill the original housing authority. If the housing authority is billed, the Veteran is still considered to be a part of the original HUD-VASH program.

REEXAMINATIONS

Decreases in income are processed immediately so that changes in rent responsibility go into effect during the following month. Increases in income are also processed immediately, though, due to the required documentation, the adjustment may take more than one month to go into effect.

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

An annual recertification is conducted for all Veterans in HUD-VASH. The recertification process consists of an annual inspection and an office visit to update the Veteran's information. In most cases, the Veteran attends this appointment on his/her own. However, the VA case manager will attend this meeting if necessary. The paperwork needed for this appointment is similar to that required for the intake process; an appointment letter with a list of documents needed is mailed to the Veteran two to three weeks in advance.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exiters

HACM identified a number of reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Graduation—Veterans who graduate from HUD-VASH may transfer to the regular HCV program and continue to receive housing assistance but no longer participate in VA case management.
- Withdrawal—A Veteran may decide that s/he no longer needs housing assistance and VA case management will discharge the Veteran from the program.
- Increase in income—Veterans who receive additional benefits or begin working or earning more money may receive too much income to be eligible for HUD-VASH.
- Eviction
- Death

Nonleased Exiters

HACM identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Loss of contact—If the program cannot communicate with a Veteran, the Veteran will be terminated from the program.

- Willingness—The Veteran has to be willing to complete the paperwork and attend appointments. Some Veterans are uncomfortable sharing the personal information required by the program.

VETERANS IN CRISIS

HACM learns that Veterans are experiencing housing issues from both property owners and VA case managers. If the property owner contacts HACM, the housing authority will inform the VA case manager and request increased home visits or support to the Veteran to remedy the issue.

If a Veteran continues to violate his/her lease, the housing authority may schedule the Veteran for a Council Meeting, in which they describe how the Veteran is violating the lease and inform her/him that s/he is at risk of losing the voucher. The housing authority tries to remind the Veteran of the hard work that s/he has put into the program so as to encourage changes in behavior necessary to remain in the unit.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

Staff who work with HUD-VASH at HACM meet with VA case managers and the VA housing specialist quarterly. They discuss how the program is working and if there are any issues that need to be addressed to improve it. Staff will also review individual cases during these meetings. Topics of discussion include changes to public programs and available assistance. Recently, increases to housing allowances through the GI Bill impacted Veterans in the program; housing authority and VA staff used the quarterly meeting as a time to discuss how this type of income would be handled moving forward to ensure that both agencies agreed and gave Veterans correct information. HACM and VA staff also have an open dialogue to deal with issues as they arise.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

HACM described a number of facilitators that have made housing sustainability easier for Veterans:

- VA staff complete the voucher application—Having the VA assist Veterans in completing the voucher application streamlines the entire process by making the turn-around time shorter and allowing HACM to assist more people in less time.
- VA staff attendance at eligibility interview
- VA housing specialist
- Communication with VA

BARRIERS TO HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

HACM indicated the following challenges for housing sustainability:

- Security deposits
- Personal history—Veteran rental and credit histories can be a barrier for accessing housing, being accepted by property owners, and accessing funds for the security deposit.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Previously, HACM submitted the same background checks for HUD-VASH applicants as they did for all of their clients. However, the criminal background check does not apply to Veterans and the housing authority has been able to decrease costs and time to housing by only requesting the sex offender check.

Because the housing search in the area served by HACM can be difficult, the housing authority and VA housing specialist encourage Veterans to find a unit that is acceptable in the short-term, even if only for a six month lease, and then continue their housing search once they have moved in. This allows Veterans to have a unit and then look for a place that meets their long-term housing criteria. Often, Veterans find that they are happy with their unit and opt not to move.

The VA referral process can be difficult for HACM. To meet their targets, the housing authority needs the VA to over-refer, because not all Veterans who are referred to HUD-VASH will sign a lease and move into a unit. However, the VA is concerned that if they over-refer, HACM may not have a sufficient number of available vouchers. Additionally, since the VA has to screen every Veteran, it can be costly and time-consuming for them to over-refer, especially as the program is often understaffed.

Step-By-Step Processes

The following chart summarizes the steps in the process of housing Veterans in HUD-VASH—from initial referral to the program to moving into the housing unit—as well as the roles fo the VA case managers and housing authorities.

VA Case Management (All Teams)	San Jose VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC)	Monterey VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Monterey (HACM)
Referral & Admission				
<p>Referral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All referral sources throughout the service area use a shared referral form. Form is faxed or delivered to the VA Palo Alto HUD-VASH office. 				
<p>Referral Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA support staff input referral information to spreadsheet accessible to all Palo Alto VA case management teams. 				

VA Case Management (All Teams)	San Jose VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC)	Monterey VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Monterey (HACM)
<p>Screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each VA case management team uses standard screening template to verify referral form information. 	<p>Screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case managers rotate regularly to conduct referral, chart and telephone screenings. 		<p>Screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One VA case manager completes all screenings by reviewing referral, chart and telephoning Veterans. 	
<p>Prioritization on Interest List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral form and screening determine Veteran eligibility and priority on interest list. 				
<p>VA Case Manager Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case managers are assigned to work with Veterans based on individual voucher openings as well as areas of expertise. 				
	<p>Admission Meeting Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager invites prioritized Veteran to program; informs Veteran of required documentation for voucher application, and schedules intake meeting to complete initial paperwork. 		<p>Admission Group Meeting Invitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veteran is contacted by a case manager and invited to attend an admission group. Veteran is told to bring required application documents to this meeting. 	
<p>Veteran Enrolled in VA case management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veteran is assigned a VA case manager upon attendance at admission meeting. 				
Voucher Application & Briefing				
	<p>Voucher Application Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veteran must attend 1-2 hour individual or group orientation, sign program agreement and complete PHA voucher application packet with VA case manager. 		<p>Admission Group Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veteran must attend admission group meeting. VA case manager completes pre-application with Veteran during this meeting. 	

VA Case Management (All Teams)	San Jose VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC)	Monterey VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Monterey (HACM)
	<p>Voucher Application Submitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager submits completed voucher application and required documents to HACSC designated HUD-VASH email/ fax. 		<p>Pre-Application Submitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager submits pre-application to HACM intake/eligibility specialist. 	
		<p>HACSC Specialist Assigned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACSC housing programs manager assigns HACSC specialist and forwards application materials to HACSC specialist. 		<p>Eligibility Verification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pre-application and referral must be received to schedule an appointment with the Veteran. The Veteran's information from these documents is entered into the waiting list. HACM will process income and HACM processes eligibility using the pre-application submitted by the VA case manager. HACM also completes sex offender check once the Veteran comes in for an interview to determine eligibility.
		<p>Eligibility Verification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACSC specialist completes sex offender check and confirms Veteran eligibility. 	<p>Voucher Application Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager assists the Veteran in completing the voucher application packet during second meeting. 	
		<p>Intake Meeting & Voucher Briefing Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACSC specialist contacts Veterans and schedules intake meeting and voucher briefing. Veteran is informed of any additional required documents to bring to meeting. 	<p>Voucher Application Submitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager submits completed application packet to the HACM by fax. 	

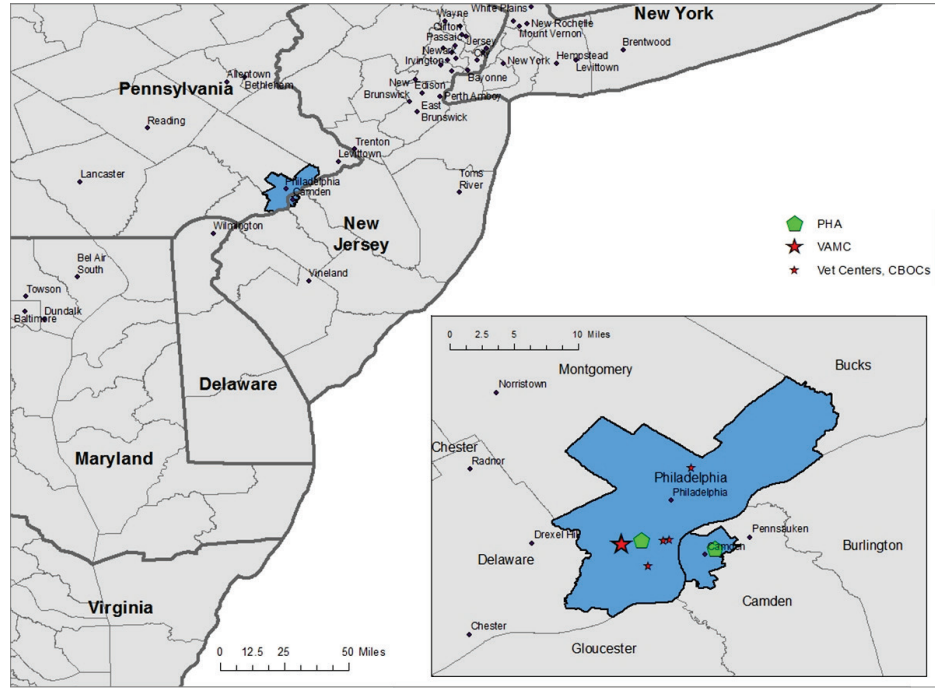
VA Case Management (All Teams)	San Jose VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC)	Monterey VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Monterey (HACM)
		<p>Intake Meeting & Voucher Briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HACSC specialist reviews application materials with Veteran and VA case manager. ▪ Voucher briefing typically takes place on the same day of the intake meeting in the afternoon. ▪ Intake meeting and voucher briefing held at HACSC, generally within 3 weeks of completed application. 		<p>Eligibility Interview Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eligibility interview scheduled 1-2 weeks after submission of voucher application. The Veteran is notified by mail, but HACM also sends a letter to the Veteran, and VA case manager is notified of the date and time. VA case manager ensures Veteran is aware of appointment.
			<p>Eligibility Interview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A VA case manager is present at all eligibility interviews, but it may not be the VA case manager assigned to Veteran as VA case managers are assigned to attend this meeting on a rotating basis. 	<p>Eligibility Interview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HACM reviews application and interviews Veterans every Wednesday afternoon at HACM office .
				<p>Voucher Briefing Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Veteran is informed of voucher briefing via letter.
				<p>Voucher Briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Voucher briefing held every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month. If Veteran file is done, they are scheduled for the soonest briefing at HACM, usually 1 month after submission of completed packet.

VA Case Management (All Teams)	San Jose VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC)	Monterey VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Monterey (HACM)
Housing Search				
	<p>Weekly Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA peer support specialist offers weekly groups providing information about the housing search; Veteran required to attend at least 4 sessions. VA case management team offers ride-alongs to visit available units 3 times each week. 		<p>Weekly Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case management team offers weekly start up group to help Veteran prepare for the housing search. VA housing specialist and VA peer support specialist offer weekly housing searches tailored to Veteran's preferences. 	
	<p>RFTA Submitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager, Veteran, or property owner submits RFTA to HACSC. 	<p>RFTA Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RFTA is hand carried to the HACS by Veteran, VA case manager or property owner. 	<p>RFTA Submitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager, Veteran, or property owner submits RFTA to HACM. 	<p>RFTA Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RFTA is hand carried to the HACM by Veteran, VA case manager or property owner.
Inspection & Rent Negotiation				
		<p>RFTA Reviewed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACSC inspector reviews RFTA to determine affordability of rent, review property ownership, and evaluate rent comparables. 		<p>RFTA Reviewed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACM inspector reviews RFTA to determine if the unit is affordable and whether the Veteran qualifies for it.
		<p>Inspection Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACSC clerk contacts property owner to schedule inspection, generally about 3 days following RFTA submission. HACSC clerk informs VA case manager of inspection time, and VA case manager informs Veteran. 		<p>Rent Negotiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inspector reviews the RFTA and file for affordability based on HUD guidelines. Rent negotiation occurs at inspection.

VA Case Management (All Teams)	San Jose VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC)	Monterey VA Case Management Team	Housing Authority of the County of Monterey (HACM)
		<p>Inspection & Rent Negotiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rent negotiation occurs at inspection. 		<p>Inspection Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The inspector contacts the property owner to make sure the unit is ready and rent is reasonable. Inspector and property owner agree on inspection date and Veteran is notified.
		<p>Reinspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If initial inspection does not pass, HACSC submits actions for correction to property owner; property owner completes actions and schedules reinspection with HACSC. 		<p>Reinspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If initial inspection does not pass, HACSC submits actions for correction to property owner; property owner completes actions and schedules reinspection with HACSC.
HAP Contract & Lease				
<p>Execution of HAP Contract & Lease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VA case managers often accompany Veterans during inspections and signing of HAP contracts. 		<p>Execution of HAP Contract & Lease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HAP contract and lease executed at property following inspection. 		<p>Execution of HAP Contract & Lease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HAP contract and lease executed at property following inspection.
Move-In				
<p>Move-In Assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All Palo Alto VA case management teams rely on local SSVF programs, other community organizations, and government agencies for move-in assistance. It has been difficult to find consistent sources of furniture, especially beds, as well as furniture delivery. 				

APPENDIX H: PHILADELPHIA SITE DESCRIPTION

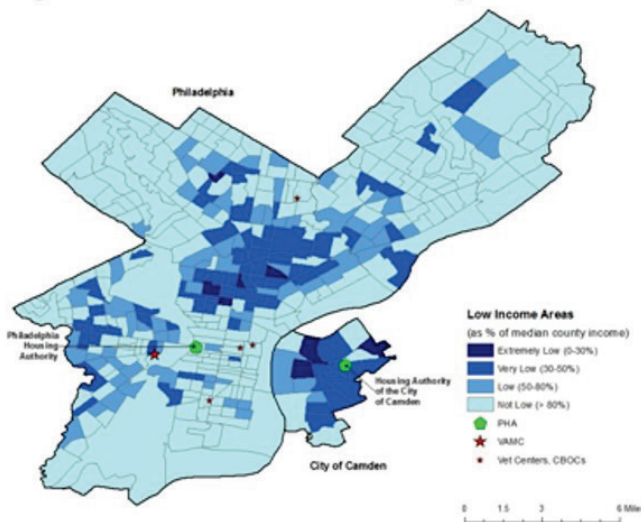
The Philadelphia HUD-VASH program operates in Philadelphia County, Bucks County, and the City of Camden. The coordinating VA site is the Philadelphia VAMC in Philadelphia, PA. The HUD-VASH program has 743 vouchers. The majority of vouchers are held by the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA, 743) and Housing Authority of the City of Camden (HACC, 135). PHA serves Veterans within Philadelphia. HACC serves Veterans within the Camden, NJ, city limits.



Housing Context

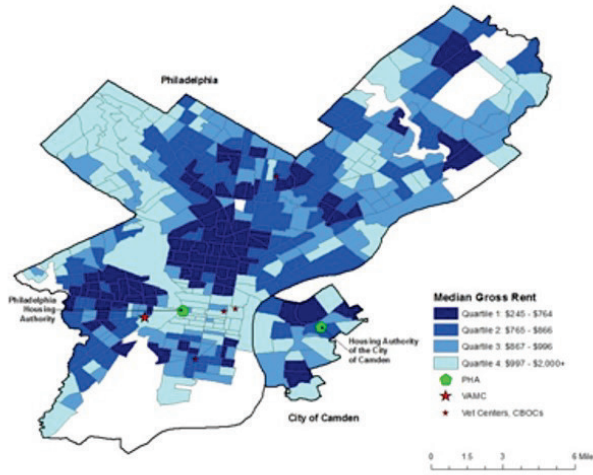
The following maps provide context for the housing markets in which Veterans participating in the Philadelphia HUD-VASH program are conducting their housing search.

Map 1 Low income areas, Philadelphia



Map 1 outlines low, very low, and extremely low income areas based on median county income. The majority of the City of Camden is low income. The majority of low income areas in Philadelphia are in the northern and western parts of the city. The VAMC is located near the western low income areas but is farther from the northern low income areas. The northern area has one Vet Center/CBOC but it is not in a low income area. The remaining Vet Centers and CBOCs, as well as the housing authority, are also not in low income areas.

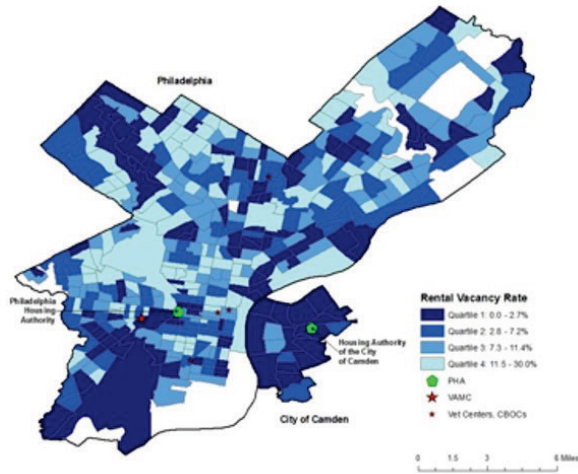
Map 2 Median gross rent, Philadelphia



Map 2 depicts median gross rent by quartile; the darkest areas have the lowest rent. In the City of Camden, median rent varies throughout the city, while in Philadelphia, the areas with the lowest median rents align with the low income areas.

Map 3 provides details on the rental vacancy rate by quartile. Darker areas have lower vacancy rates. The City of Camden has very low vacancy across most of the city. In Philadelphia, vacancy rates do not appear to be as low, except in the southwest and parts of the northeast. Low income areas and areas with lower median rents seem to have units available.

Map 3 Rental vacancy rate, Philadelphia



VA Case Management

The site has VA teams serving HUD-VASH Veterans. Teams include a supervisor, case managers, a SUD specialist, a housing specialist, a peer support specialist and social workers. The case load is 1:30.

Team	Associated Housing Authority	Service Location	Team Composition
Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service Center	Philadelphia Housing Authority	Philadelphia VAMC Veterans Multi-Service Center	
Pathways to Housing			ACT team
Camden	Housing Authority of the City of Camden		
Bucks County	Bucks County Housing Authority		1 person

OUTREACH

A large proportion of referrals to HUD-VASH are self-referrals or walk-ins; Veterans hear about the program from other Veterans or other VHA Homeless Programs. Safe Haven, emergency shelters, community partners, and SSVF also provide referrals. Staff at the VAMC refer Veterans to HUD-VASH through primary care or inpatient mental health and psychiatry if a Veteran identifies as homeless. Finally, the Grant and Per Diem program supplies the largest number of HUD-VASH referrals.

Following a recent HUD-VASH Boot Camp, the VA case management team began working with community-based homeless programs to coordinate outreach efforts throughout Philadelphia. This effort minimizes overlap among programs and ensures that individuals experiencing homelessness who are being contacted for services are receiving assistance through only one provider. The VA case management team participates in a weekly meeting to identify Veterans who are in need of immediate assistance; this meeting informs the team's outreach efforts.

REFERRALS AND ELIGIBILITY

Philadelphia currently maintains an interest list for Veterans living in Philadelphia who want to participate in HUD-VASH. Pathways to Housing has vouchers available for the most vulnerable Veterans.

A member of the VA case management team conducts an initial screening with all potential HUD-VASH participants, typically during a walk-in appointment. This screening is captured in the Veteran's medical record through a template that includes eligibility for healthcare services, homelessness, open housing authority cases, sex offender status, psychosocial history, assets, and future goals. A member of the VA case management team also completes the HOMES assessment. Both of these assessments help the team determine whether the Veteran is eligible for the program and where to prioritize him/her on the interest list. In addition, the assessments provide an overview of the Veteran's VA case management needs and whether s/he is in need of mental health assistance or substance abuse counseling.

The most chronically homeless and severely mentally ill Veterans may qualify for Pathways to Housing, a housing program that uses the HUD-VASH voucher in combination with an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team case management approach. If the screening indicates that a Veteran is likely to qualify for Pathways to Housing, s/he will be referred to that team.

During the initial screening, the VA case manager informs the Veteran about the documentation required to apply for a voucher. The VA case manager also asks the Veteran to provide emergency contact information, including family members' phone numbers and addresses, in case the VA case manager is unable to contact the Veteran directly. The VA case manager also refers the Veteran to community agencies for resources, such as housing and employment services.

The program accepts non-service-connected Veterans and Veterans with zero income but will immediately develop a financial plan with them. For Veterans with income approaching the program's maximum allowance, the VA case manager will ensure that s/he understands the VA case management component of the program. If the Veteran is able to afford a unit without the

voucher, s/he might opt not to be placed on the interest list. If that is the case, the VA case manager will offer resources and other assistance.

TARGETING

The Philadelphia HUD-VASH program targets chronically homeless individuals, females, families, and OEF/OIF Veterans. The interest list prioritizes Veterans in the following order: chronically homeless, females, and families. Emergencies can also increase a Veteran's prioritization rank, as well as the combination of two or more target areas (e.g., a chronically homeless OEF/OIF family would be at the top). Veterans who present as very high need are referred to Pathways to Housing.

REFERRAL AND ADMISSION

When a voucher becomes available, the VA case management team completes a more detailed intake screening during which the Veteran is again informed of required documentation to apply for a voucher. Two VA case managers meet with the Veteran and then present his/her case to the VA case management team at a weekly committee meeting. The team accepts or rejects the Veteran, who is not present at the meeting; if the Veteran is accepted, s/he is assigned a VA case manager. To avoid a lag between the Veteran's acceptance into the program and application for a voucher, Veterans are encouraged to have the required documentation ready at this point. If a Veteran does not have the documents readily available, the Homeless Advocacy Project can assist with obtaining them.

VOUCHER APPLICATION

Once the VA case management team accepts the Veteran into the HUD-VASH program the Veteran's VA case manager works with her/him to complete the HUD-VASH application and mails it to the housing authority. The housing authority completes a background check and contacts the Veteran's VA case manager if there are any issues. Otherwise, the VA case manager is notified when a voucher is available.

If a number of Veterans are receiving a voucher, the voucher briefing is generally held at the Veterans Multi-Service Center. If only a few vouchers are being issued—or if the Veteran is working with HACC—the briefing takes place at the housing authority. One-on-one briefings are also offered for Veterans who are uncomfortable with crowds, as is often the case for those suffering from PTSD. All materials required by the housing authority should be completed and in-place prior to this briefing.

The VA case management team takes responsibility for the majority of the voucher processes that the housing authorities previously completed. The VA case management team completes the intake paperwork and orientation while the housing authorities conduct the voucher briefing.

HOUSING SEARCH

To expedite the housing search, the HUD-VASH voucher now expires in 60 days rather than 120 in Philadelphia. Extensions can be granted if circumstances permit. However, VA case managers encourage Veterans to start the housing search process as soon as possible, even before the voucher has been issued. The team feels this proactive approach has decreased the amount of time that a Veteran remains homeless.

The VA case management team offers a weekly orientation meeting at PVAMC or the Veterans Multi-Service Center, which allows Veterans to learn about the program, what is expected from them, what they can expect from the housing authority, and where they are in the housing process. This meeting also provides an opportunity for Veterans to hear from others who have been in the program and can offer advice on the housing search. Veterans who have been accepted into HUD-VASH but are not yet housed are required to attend this meeting every week, and they are welcome to attend before they have been issued a voucher. No similar meeting is offered in Camden.

For the past year, the Philadelphia VA case management team has offered housing tours following the weekly orientation meeting. Each week, the tour visits a different part of the city that reflects areas of interest to Veterans. If a Veteran requires additional housing search assistance, the VA case manager will also take her/him out one-on-one. The team tries to be mindful of neighborhood triggers; many Veterans with a SUD history take part in a 12-step program that encourages them to identify “people, places, and things” that act as triggers. Neighborhoods where Veterans have contacts who sell or use illegal substances and neighborhoods with widespread drug use are avoided.

The Philadelphia VA case management team has a good relationship with a number of local property owners. They understand the clientele and appreciate the VA case management offered to tenants. These property owners notify the VA case management team about upcoming vacancies and sometimes hold units for Veterans who will be issued their vouchers shortly. In addition, some property owners waive application fees, are more flexible with Veterans with criminal backgrounds and poor credit histories, and may work with Veterans to create a payment plan in lieu of an up-front security deposit. During inspections, the property owners often have a maintenance person on site to make small repairs. Finally, these property owners are more practiced at the paperwork and inspections, which makes the process faster.

INSPECTION

According to the VA case management team, inspections in Philadelphia have become stricter over time and many units fail the first inspection, which can cause delays and create issues with property owners new to HUD-VASH. Prior to some changes to this process, described below, an initial inspection could take 30–60 days or more if a unit required a reinspection. However, PHA expedites the inspection process for HUD-VASH participants.

Some pre-inspected units are available in Philadelphia. PHA offers preinspections for property owners who they have worked with for a period of time, a change that is the result of a recent HUD-VASH Boot Camp. The VA case management team sends PHA a list of properties—often a set of units owned by one property management company—and PHA sends an inspector to inspect all of the units at once. PHA emails the VA case management team a list of pre-inspected units.

In addition, property owners may also have their units inspected prior to submission of the RFTA, which speeds up the process of scheduling an initial inspection and possibly a reinspection. It also creates competition for Veterans; since these units often move off the market faster, Veterans compete with one another to get housed first. Other changes to the process include ensuring that the same inspector who conducts the initial inspection conducts the

reinspection and allowing some property managers to attend the initial inspection and make repairs at that time.

MOVE-IN

The VA case management team described a fear of exhausting move-in resources. When funding is tight, they try to ensure that each Veteran can access either a security deposit or furniture. Unless they have special circumstances, such as being part of a family or very low income, Veterans can only access one type of assistance or the other.

The VA case management team makes an effort to assist Veterans with move-in funds and supplies. In Philadelphia, security deposit funding is available through SSVF as well as the City of Philadelphia Office of Supportive Housing. In Camden, SSVF has provided funding for security deposits, first month’s rent, and utility deposits, as well as beds.

VA case managers indicated that furniture assistance can be difficult to access; some Veterans move into their units with only a sleeping bag and do not have furniture until they save enough money to purchase it and have it delivered to their units. However, some furniture assistance is available through community providers. Veterans can access a thrift store voucher through SSVF to purchase furniture, which staff from the thrift store will deliver to the Veteran’s home. If Veterans find free or inexpensive furniture on their own, the VA case manager will assist them in delivering it to their apartment. Generally, the VA case management team discourages donations due to issues with bed bugs and quality.

VA CASE MANAGEMENT

The following table describes VA case management requirements:

During housing process	Veterans required to attend weekly orientation meetings; VA case manager talks to Veteran on phone once a week and face-to-face once a month.
Year 1	VA case manager conducts monthly home visit for first year.
Year 2+	VA case manager calls Veteran at least once a month.
Notes	In lieu of monthly VA case management contact, Veteran can attend a group meeting. SUD specialist offers weekly group meeting and individual appointments. If Veteran is unreachable after being housed, VA case manager will conduct home visit.

VA case management often begins once a Veteran completes an official HUD-VASH intake (i.e., after being pulled from the interest list and approved by the committee). At this point, the Veteran is referred to services and resources. Because there are several steps between screening and the voucher briefing, VA case managers work to decrease the amount of time that the Veteran is homeless. However, VA case management officially begins once the Veteran attends his/her voucher briefing.

When a Veteran first enters the program, and throughout the housing process, VA case managers usually speak with her/him on the phone once a week and have face-to-face meetings at least once a month. After the Veteran is housed, VA case managers conduct monthly home visits in the first year. During the second year, VA case managers will call the Veteran at least once a month. If a Veteran does not respond to a telephone call, the VA case managers conduct a home visit. Generally, the intensity of VA case management steps down gradually, with less frequent

communication over time unless the Veteran experiences a crisis. The Philadelphia VA case management team offers a number of group meetings that Veterans can attend in lieu of their monthly contact with their VA case manager.

The VA case management team also includes a VA SUD specialist who offers a weekly HUD-VASH group as well as individual appointments for Veterans. In addition, the Addiction Recovery Unit affiliated with the Philadelphia VAMC offers classes and groups; Veterans' participation in this program begins with two or three days a week and the frequency decreases over time. Although the VA case management team follows a Housing First philosophy and attendance at these groups is not required, VA case managers "repeatedly recommend" participation as the housing authorities prefer that tenants be abstinent.

As part of their participation in HUD-VASH, Veterans are required to comply with VA healthcare by attending doctors' appointments. VA case managers try to ensure Veterans' compliance and will help them get to appointments if necessary.

Philadelphia VA case management utilizes the following evidence-based practices: Assertive Community Treatment, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Harm Reduction, Motivational Interviewing, Intensive Case Management, Peer Support/Mentoring, Supported Employment, and Housing First.

PORTS

Philadelphia described porting as difficult because there are few vouchers remaining at other sites to dedicate to one of their Veterans.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exiters

The VA case management team identified a number of reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Nonpayment of rent—In Camden, nonpayment of rent is the largest reason that Veterans exit HUD-VASH.
- Problems with housing unit—Veterans may have issues with the property owners or neighbors. Property owners may not make needed repairs, so Veterans refuse to stay in the unit.
- Isolation—Veterans may have no history of living alone and are uncomfortable doing so. They may decide to leave the program to live with relatives or significant others.
- Program violations—Veterans may allow friends or family to move into their unit without following the proper procedure with the housing authority.
- Moving—Veterans may want to port the voucher to another city and decide to move there anyway, even when a port is impossible.
- Withdrawal—Veterans may no longer need the support the program provides and voluntarily leave the program.

- Increase in income—Veterans who become over-income are no longer eligible to receive housing assistance.
- Homeownership—The Philadelphia program encourages Veterans to learn about VA homeownership resources so that they can purchase a property rather than rent.
- Unit abandonment
- Loss of contact
- Incarceration
- Death

Nonleased Exiters

The VA case management team identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Challenging process—Veterans may view the program as a significant commitment that requires extensive paperwork. The process can seem overwhelming and protracted. While staff have tried to alleviate these issues by providing the weekly orientation group and making improvements to the inspections process, the process can still feel intimidating.
- Motivation—Veterans may lack motivation to complete the process, including searching for an apartment.
- Readiness—Veterans may realize that independent housing is not right for them at the time, or fear leaving a living situation that may not be ideal but is comfortable. Veterans who are not accustomed to unstructured living, such as those who have been previously incarcerated, face these difficulties as well. These Veterans may seek assistance from another program with additional services and requirements.
- Increase in income—Veterans may become over-income and ineligible for the program if they secure employment or begin to receive additional benefits.

VETERANS IN CRISIS

VA case managers review Veterans' medical records monthly to learn about medical or mental health issues. Other Veterans may also report to a VA case manager that a Veteran is relapsing. Veterans may inform their VA case managers about problems; however, the VA case management team stated that it is often at the point of an emergency. VA case managers who are closer to the Veteran or have been working with him/her longer are more likely to hear about issues from the Veteran in a timely manner. Often, VA case managers learn that a Veteran is in crisis when they are unable to contact her/him. In this case, the VA case manager will visit the Veteran's home, call emergency contacts, and/or reach out to the property owner. The VA case manager may also review the Veteran's medical record to see if any issues are noted.

If a Veteran is not paying rent, the property owner usually contacts the VA case manager directly, either by phone or email. There have been instances when the VA case management team did not learn about a Veteran's nonpayment of rent until s/he owed significant back rent. Since some Veterans pay such a small amount toward the rent, the property owner may not realize that the payments have not been made. Typically, the VA case management team, the

housing authority, and property owner work together to set up a payment plan with the Veteran, which may involve SSVF funds; however, the rent arrearages may be too much for the Veteran to pay. If a Veteran is evicted for nonpayment of rent and then seeks a new HUD-VASH voucher (or HCV), s/he must pay the balance owed to the housing authority in order to receive another voucher.

GRADUATION

A Veteran has never graduated from the Philadelphia HUD-VASH program. No HCVs are available for Veterans outside of HUD-VASH. If general vouchers were available, the VA case management team would graduate a number of Veterans who are ready; however, as long as Veterans are using a HUD-VASH voucher, they must continue to receive VA case management. Interestingly, the VA case management team believes that some Veterans would not want to exit VA case management, even if they were financially stable; many Veterans are more concerned about losing VA case management than they are about losing financial assistance from the housing authority, even Veterans who are primarily self-sufficient.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

The Philadelphia VA case management team has a good relationship with PHA. The VA case management teams meet with PHA weekly to answer questions and address any housing concerns. The program also collocates with PHA during voucher briefings and recertifications, making the relationship much stronger.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

The Philadelphia VA case management team identified a number of facilitators of housing sustainability for Veterans in the HUD-VASH program:

- HUD-VASH Boot Camp
- Decrease in initial voucher timeframe—Philadelphia decreased the initial issuance period from 120 to 60 days, which has led Veterans to lease up more quickly.
- Smaller case loads—Smaller case loads allow case managers to provide greater support to the Veterans. Increases in HUD-VASH staff and VA specialists have been helpful for the program.
- VA SUD specialist—The VA SUD specialist prevents the team from losing Veterans or being unable to provide specialized support to Veterans with a history of substance abuse.
- VA peer support specialist—The VA peer support specialist provides needed assistance to the team.
- VA housing specialist—The VA housing specialist provides assistance with VA systems and paperwork, giving VA case managers more time to dedicate to supporting Veterans.
- Community connections—The Philadelphia program has formed community connections in a number of ways: collocating VA case managers at the Veterans Multi-Service Center ; maintaining relationships with many community service providers, such as SSVF, GPD, Safe Haven, and Veterans Empowerment Center; and forming relationships with local property owners who house HUD-VASH participants.

- Connection to resources—Community resources can assist Veterans in furthering their education and finding employment or volunteer work. Engagement with outside providers may help Veterans transition out of HUD-VASH.
- Relationship with VA case manager—A close relationship may allow VA case managers to identify issues Veterans are experiencing before they escalate.

BARRIERS FOR HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

Veterans in Philadelphia face a number of challenges to accessing and sustaining permanent housing, including the following:

- Personal history—Poor credit and criminal backgrounds are a barrier to Veterans being accepted into a unit.
- Financial issues—Lack of a fiduciary or the length of time it takes to get a fiduciary if a Veteran requires one can make it difficult to get housing.
- Housing process—The timeframe can be too long for property owners. Additionally, there seems to be much duplicated paperwork that causes delays and draws out the process.
- Cost of rent—PHA has reduced the amount that is offered to property owners, leading to protracted rent negotiations. For Veterans who are already in housing, some have been forced to move when their lease expired because PHA would no longer pay the same rental amount. These decreases have even caused some property owners to drop out of HUD-VASH.
- SUD—Veterans in recovery from substance abuse may relapse when they have a space of their own. For some, there is a “honeymoon period” when they first move into housing and feel that their lives are in order, but the pressure to keep up with the new responsibility may lead to relapse.
- Mental illness

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The Philadelphia VA case management teams believe that they would be able to better serve Veterans if they had additional transportation (i.e., a car for each VA case manager). Currently, the VA case managers must share cars and vans.

Computer access for Veterans would enable the program to help Veterans with job searches and email communication. Veterans currently use VA case managers’ computers for these tasks, which is not ideal.

Additional resources for furniture and other items Veterans need for move-in would improve that process. The team described that furniture and funding assistance for these types of items are difficult to find. This often leads to Veterans renting furniture, which is cost prohibitive.

Philadelphia Housing Authority

PHA has three staff who work on HUD-VASH, including one special programs director, one special programs team leader, and one HUD-VASH leasing coordinator dedicated entirely to the

program. The case load for the HUD-VASH leasing coordinator is 1:460. PHA recently restructured their services: previously, offices were located in five major neighborhoods throughout the city; now there is only one centralized branch. The housing authority typically meets with HUD-VASH participants in the community at the Veterans Multi-Service Center as they have found that Veterans are more familiar with and comfortable in this location. PHA staff may meet with Veterans at the housing authority or the VAMC as well.

HUD-VASH clients are given priority within the HCV Program; Veterans’ files (indicated with a purple folder), are placed at the top of the list for inspections and rent negotiations. Details on PHA’s voucher issuance and payment standards are shown in the table below:

Payment Standard	1BR - \$942, 2BR - \$1,135, 3BR - \$1,414, 4BR - \$1,518, 5BR - \$1,746, 6BR - \$1,973
Portion of Rent that is Veteran’s Responsibility	Based on family size: 1BR - 28%, 2-3BR - 27%, 4+BR - 26%
Initial Voucher Issuance Period	60 days

VOUCHER APPLICATION

The VA case management team assists the Veteran in completing the HUD-VASH application and submits the application to PHA. The housing authority confirms receipt of all necessary documents, completes a background check on the Veteran to ensure eligibility for the program, and then schedules a voucher briefing.

VOUCHER BRIEFING

The voucher briefing includes an overview of general program polices, including expectations for the Veteran and what to expect from the housing authority. Voucher briefings typically take place with small groups of Veterans at the Veterans Multi-Service Center or PVAMC and they generally receive their voucher that day.

HOUSING SEARCH

PHA has relationships with many area property owners. In fact, the housing authority offers weekly landlord classes with prospective property owners interested in becoming certified for the HCV Program. Because the property owners have many properties in the program already, the housing authority is familiar with area rent and shares this information with Veterans. In addition, PHA offers some pre-inspected units as well as some project-based units for families.

PHA indicated that rent in Philadelphia can fluctuate a great deal from block to block, and Veterans are expected to pay between 30% and 40% of their income. PHA is experiencing a rent freeze; rent increases have not occurred in Philadelphia since sequestration.

INSPECTION

Once the housing authority receives the RFTA, PHA schedules an inspection unless the unit has already been pre-inspected. Inspections are expedited for HUD-VASH clients, usually taking place within five business days of RFTA receipt. The Veteran does not need to be present during the inspection. If the unit fails inspection, a reinspection generally extends the process by another week or two. Veterans or their VA case managers can also contact PHA for inspections any time

during the year if there are issues with the unit. This enables Veterans to ensure necessary repairs are made by the property owner.

HAP CONTRACT AND LEASE

The housing authority described intense rent negotiations, which, at times, delay the housing process, even with property owners familiar with the HCV Program and pre-inspected units. Higher rent requests require an additional inspection, which occurs in about 10–15% of cases. After the rent negotiation, the HAP contract and lease agreement are executed in-person at the housing authority with the property owner, tenant, case manager, and housing authority leasing agent present.

PORTS

PHA does not port many vouchers. However, Veterans can port to another area once they have been approved by the receiving VA and housing authority. When the Veteran moves to another service area, s/he must use a local HUD-VASH voucher.

REEXAMINATIONS

Veterans are not required to report increases in income until the annual recertification. Decreases in income are processed immediately and changes in rent take effect the following month. Veterans can also add children to the household composition at any time throughout the year.

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

Annual recertification meetings are conducted monthly at the PVAMC. The meeting is scheduled through PHA, which mails the Veteran a letter and copies the case manager on email. At the meeting, the housing authority verifies income to ensure the Veteran remains eligible for the program and updates the household composition. If the household composition has increased, PHA often encourages the Veteran to consider applying for a bigger unit during the recertification process, as recertification is the only time that a Veteran can request a move. The Inspections Department will also schedule a reinspection of the unit annually.

During the recertification, the property owner may increase the Veteran's rent. Since PHA currently has a freeze on rent increases, the Veteran is responsible for the increase. If the Veteran does not believe that s/he can afford the new rent amount, PHA will ensure the accuracy of the income information on file and may issue a new voucher to the Veteran to find a new housing unit that is affordable. PHA described recertification as difficult for some Veterans.

REASONS FOR EXITS

Leased-Up Exitters

Veterans who exit the program after leasing a unit often experience eviction for nonpayment of rent or submit incomplete recertification materials.

Nonleased Exitters

The housing authority indicated that being over-income or deciding to move in with family were common reasons why Veterans did not rent a unit with their HUD-VASH voucher. Additionally,

PHA said that many of the Veterans enrolled in the program in Philadelphia are older and have medical concerns and may decide to exit the program because they need a higher level of care.

VETERANS IN CRISIS

PHA generally learns that Veterans are experiencing housing issues when a VA case manager reaches out to the housing authority. Property owners may also contact the housing authority if a Veteran is not paying the rent but they generally speak directly with the tenant. The housing authority tries to work with Veterans in crisis as much as they can, reaching out to the VA case manager and doing their due diligence. At times, the housing authority will learn that a Veteran has been evicted only after the eviction has taken place. While PHA will issue the Veteran a new voucher, the Veteran must satisfy any debt on his/her previous rental or risk losing the new voucher.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

When working with HUD-VASH clients, VA case managers serve as the Veterans' first point of contact. The housing authority indicated that having the VA case manager serve as a liaison is very effective for communication. Veterans can contact PHA directly, but the housing authority finds it useful to keep the VA involved in all communications with Veterans. PHA has one point person within the VA, who sends specific issues to the designated VA case manager working with the Veteran. The housing authority may get more involved with a specific VA case manager, depending on individual circumstances.

PHA sends a weekly report to the VA outlining where Veterans are in the housing process and listing pre-inspected units available for HUD-VASH Veterans. Two weekly meetings also assist with communication between service providers. One meeting takes place between PHA and the VA. Prior to this meeting, VA will email a list of questions for the housing authority to respond to at the meeting. The second meeting is coordinated through the Philadelphia Office of Supportive Housing (OSH) to ensure that all Veterans known to local service providers are receiving appropriate services. This meeting includes representatives from OSH, HUD, and community groups who work with the Veteran population, including the VAMC.

FACILITATORS TO HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

PHA described a number of facilitators that have made housing sustainability easier for Veterans:

- HUD-VASH Boot Camp—The HUD-VASH Boot Camp opened dialogue between service providers and enabled the program to operate more quickly and effectively.
- Streamlining paperwork—PHA has tried to streamline the application process and provide VA and Veterans with checklists to ensure that everything is clear and completed correctly.
- Decrease in initial voucher timeframe—PHA decreased the initial voucher period from 120 days to 60 days, which has resulted in Veterans leasing units more quickly.
- Pre-inspection—Having pre-inspected units available for Veterans has expedited the lease-up process and the number of steps that must be completed between the selection of a unit and move-in.

- Meeting with Veterans in the community or at the VAMC—PHA said that Veterans are more likely to attend meetings held at locations where they are more comfortable.
- Regular communication between VA and PHA—Weekly reporting has improved communication between the agencies and provided better Veteran supports.
- One point of contact—PHA appreciates having just one point person at the VA who can communicate issues to the correct case manager.

BARRIERS FOR HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

PHA indicated several challenges for housing sustainability:

- Selecting a unit in a timely manner
- Tension between HUD and VA performance measures—The housing authority’s priority is to have Veterans leased through HUD-VASH. However, VA has prioritized housing chronically homeless Veterans, a group that is very difficult to serve and often takes a longer time to house. Though both HUD and VA want to house Veterans, the way this outcome is measured can cause tension between the two agencies.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

PHA is working with VA on refurbishing a project-based building for HUD-VASH recipients. Veterans who are interested in being housed near other Veterans may prefer this type of housing.

The housing authority gauges its success by the number of Veterans who lease housing through HUD-VASH. VA, by contrast, measures performance by the number of Veterans enrolled in the program. Being enrolled does not necessarily mean the Veteran is housed. Rather, the Veterans, many of whom have been chronically homeless and are difficult to serve, are receiving case management and typically require a great deal of support and encouragement to reach the point of leasing an apartment. The housing authority, however, needs to ensure that it reaches the performance objectives outlined by HUD, which can be difficult with HUD-VASH participants.

Housing Authority of the City of Camden

HACC has staff who work with both HUD-VASH and other HCV clients, including a HCV Program manager and leasing coordinator. Veterans are served by HACC staff at the housing authority. Details on HACC’s voucher issuance and payment standards are shown in the table below:

Payment Standard	90% FMR
Portion of Rent that is Veteran’s Responsibility	Veteran is responsible for a portion of rent
Initial Voucher Issuance Period	60 days

HACC’s administrative plan prioritizes services to Veterans; in the case of a funding shortage, Veterans would retain their vouchers.

VOUCHER APPLICATION

VA case managers complete the HUD-VASH application with Veterans and are responsible for ensuring that Veterans have all necessary documents. The VA case manager submits the application to the housing authority. The housing authority runs a background check and confirms Veteran eligibility.

VOUCHER BRIEFING

Voucher briefings are held at HACC. Briefings are typically one-on-one, but if several Veterans are applying for HUD-VASH at the same time a group briefing can be held. The housing authority indicated that if the Veteran attends the briefing and remains for the entire session, they are guaranteed a voucher. The initial voucher issuance period is 60 days but can be extended to a maximum of 120 days.

HOUSING SEARCH

Veterans who enroll in HUD-VASH in Camden must live within the city limits. HACC described Camden as a “tough city” and said that the majority of Veterans do not want to live there. However, the housing authority does have relationships with local property owners and offers pre-inspected units. They also refer Veterans to recommended websites and the housing authority’s bulletin board during their housing search.

The housing authority said that it can be difficult to find a unit in Camden. More apartment complexes in the city are running credit and criminal history checks, and conducting drug tests on applicants. In addition, while most of the bigger property owners will accept HCVs, many smaller ones do not, particularly as the housing authority pays only 90% FMR. These property owners often use non-negotiation of a set rent as a way of avoiding acceptance of these clients.

INSPECTION

Once the housing authority receives the RFTA, an inspection is scheduled unless the unit has already been pre-inspected. The inspection process in Camden is expedited for Veterans and often takes place the next day following receipt of the RFTA. However, reinspections are not prioritized for Veterans.

HAP CONTRACT AND LEASE

Some property owners in Camden do not accept the rent offered by the housing authority, especially since it is set at 90% FMR. Once a unit passes inspection and the rent offered by the housing authority is accepted by the property owner, the contract and lease are signed at the housing authority offices.

PORTS

Veterans can port to another area if they choose. In most of the current Camden ports, the Veteran ports to an area that is still within the Philadelphia VAMC service area, usually Bucks County, or to another part of New Jersey. The State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs processes Bucks County ports. HACC is then billed for and pays the Veteran’s rent above the amount for which the Veteran is responsible, in addition to the administrative fees associated with the lease-up. In this way, HACC becomes more of a “pass through” than a

service provider for these clients. However, the housing authority said this process can take a very long time and few Veterans do it. Veterans may also move to another part of New Jersey. In these cases, HACC still administers the voucher even though it is outside of their jurisdiction.

REEXAMINATIONS

When a Veteran experiences a change in income, it must be reported to the housing authority immediately. Often, the housing authority says this occurs because the Veteran starts to work or receive additional benefits. If a Veteran becomes over-income and can pay the full rental amount for six months, the housing authority revokes the voucher and assigns it to another Veteran.

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

HACC notifies Veterans of an upcoming recertification via mail. If the Veteran does not respond to the first letter, HACC sends a second letter. If a Veteran remains unresponsive after these two communications, the voucher is terminated. The housing authority does not typically inform the VA case manager of an upcoming recertification unless there is a problem.

REASONS FOR EXITS

The housing authority described losing many Veterans from the HUD-VASH program, indicating that for every two Veterans that lease, three Veterans exit the program, whether before signing a lease or after being housed.

Leased-Up Exiters

HACC identified the following reasons why Veterans may exit HUD-VASH after leasing a housing unit:

- Eviction—The housing authority has experienced many cause for eviction notices, from nonpayment of rent to drug use to compromising the peaceful enjoyment of the neighbors. HACC indicated that these social issues are similar to those experienced by regular HCV clients.
- Death

Nonleased Exiters

HACC identified a number of reasons why Veterans may leave the HUD-VASH program after they have received a voucher but prior to obtaining a housing unit:

- Readiness—Veterans may not be ready to accept assistance. Their personal circumstances, such as mental health issues and drug dependency, may also make it more difficult for them to move successfully through the application and housing process.
- Challenging process—Some Veterans are not interested in the HUD-VASH program once they learn about the paperwork and VA case management components. They are not interested in answering questions or being interviewed and find the process invasive, overwhelming, or both.

- Application requirements—Veterans must meet the property owner’s leasing criteria, which could involve paying an application fee and taking part in a credit check, criminal history check, and drug tests. Property owners may then deny the Veteran.
- Housing authority boundaries—Some Veterans who enter the HUD-VASH program through Camden are not interested in living within the city limit, so they exit the program to seek housing elsewhere.

VETERANS IN CRISIS

HACC usually learns about issues with Veterans from property owners, who sometimes look to the housing authority to serve as a management company so they do not have to take a Veteran to court. When this occurs, the HACC leasing coordinator will reach out to the VA case management team. If a property owner evicts a Veteran, HACC contacts the VA case manager and provides him/her with a copy of the eviction paperwork and the letter sent to the Veteran.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

Monthly meetings are held with the housing authority and Camden VA case management team. At these meetings, the teams discuss Veterans who are going through the housing process and any issues individual clients may be experiencing or that will be coming up in the future.

FACILITATORS OF HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

HACC described a number of facilitators that have made housing sustainability easier for Veterans:

- Program flexibility—The smaller size of HACC allows the housing authority to have more leeway on the services they offer, which can be beneficial for clients.
- Communication with VA—Having regular meetings with the VA case management team enables both the VA and the housing authority to provide better, more efficient, and more personalized services for Veterans.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

HACC indicated several challenges for housing sustainability:

- Readiness—Some Veterans are not ready to accept the assistance that is being offered through HUD-VASH due to their personal circumstances, including mental health challenges and/or drug dependency.
- Motivation—The housing authority said that the HUD-VASH population can be difficult to work with as there are some program components that must be completed by the Veterans.
- Attrition—Property owners need to lease their units quickly and keep them leased. Having Veterans drop out of HUD-VASH both prior to lease-up and following lease-up can cause difficulties in working with property owners.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The HUD-VASH program is unique within HACC. HACC reports to the Newark HUD Field Office and typically interacts only with other entities in New Jersey. HUD-VASH, however, operates through the Philadelphia VAMC in Philadelphia, PA. HACC often feels like an independent entity, and while they do receive support from their field office, they were not included in the local HUD-VASH Boot Camp to improve program efficiencies. It would be helpful to participate in more local HUD-VASH events.

The use of data by HUD and VA is helpful in ensuring that all parties are reaching their goals. HACC indicated that since HUD-VASH is just one of several special programs it manages, it is important to analyze data related to performance and targets.

Step-By-Step Processes

The following chart summarizes the steps in the process of housing Veterans in HUD-VASH—from initial referral to the program to moving into the housing unit—as well as the roles of the VA case managers and housing authorities.

VA Case Management	Housing Authority of the City of Camden (HACC)	Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA)
Referral & Admission		
Referral & Referral Processing		
<p>Walk-In Appointment Initial Screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager conducts initial screening with Veteran to determine eligibility using Veteran medical records and HOMES assessment templates. VA case manager informs Veteran of documentation needed to complete voucher application. 		
<p>Prioritization on Interest List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial screening assessment determines Veteran eligibility and priority on interest list. 		
<p>Intake Screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two VA case managers meet with Veteran to complete more detailed intake screening. 		
<p>Case Review & VA Case Manager Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case managers present Veteran’s case at weekly committee meeting; if Veteran is accepted into HUD-VASH, s/he is assigned a case manager. 		
Veteran Enrollment in VA Case Management		

VA Case Management	Housing Authority of the City of Camden (HACC)	Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA)
Voucher Application & Briefing		
<p>Voucher Application Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager assists Veteran in completing voucher application. 		
<p>Voucher Application Submitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA case manager submits completed voucher application and required documents to housing authority by mail. 		
	<p>Eligibility Verification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HACC completes sex offender check and confirms Veteran eligibility. 	<p>Eligibility Verification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHA completes sex offender check and confirms Veteran eligibility.
	<p>Voucher Briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voucher briefing held at HACC office. 	<p>Voucher Briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHA emails the VA when the HUD-VASH applicants are “voucher ready”. The VA contacts the Veteran. Voucher briefings usually held every Friday at the Veterans Multi-Service Center or at the PHA office.
Housing Search		
<p>Weekly Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philadelphia VA case management team offers orientation meetings about the program and housing process; attendance required for Veterans who have not yet been housed. Philadelphia VA case management team offers housing tour after orientation meeting to a different part of the city each week. Meetings not offered with Camden VA case management team. 		<p>Pre-inspected Units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHA pre-inspects units and emails list of pre-inspected units to VA case management team.
<p>RFTA Submission</p>	<p>RFTA Processing</p>	<p>RFTA Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Veteran submits the RFTA to the VA case worker who then submits it to PHA’s Special Programs team.

VA Case Management	Housing Authority of the City of Camden (HACC)	Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA)
Inspection & Rent Negotiation		
	<p style="text-align: center;">Inspection Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HACC expedites inspection process for HUD-VASH; inspections take place 1 business day following RFTA submission. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Inspection Scheduled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PHA expedites inspection process for HUD-VASH; inspections take place 4-5 business days following RFTA submission. Once the RFTA is submitted, the inspection is added to the Inspections Dept queue. The inspection is labeled as “VASH” so the Inspection Dept knows to expedite.
	Inspection	Inspection
	<p style="text-align: center;">Reinspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reinspections are not expedited; they occur at same rate as other clients 	<p style="text-align: center;">Reinspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reinspections occur within 1-2 weeks
	Rent Negotiation	<p style="text-align: center;">Rent Negotiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Once the unit is approved, the Veteran’s file is forwarded to the Owner Services Dept which then negotiates the rent with the property owner.
HAP Contract & Lease		
<p style="text-align: center;">Execution of HAP Contract and Lease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HAP contract and lease are executed at PHA with PHA leasing agent, property owner, Veteran, and VA case manager 	<p style="text-align: center;">Execution of HAP Contract and Lease</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Execution of HAP Contract and Lease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HAP contract and lease are executed at PHA with PHA leasing agent, property owner, Veteran and VA case manager.
Move-In		
<p style="text-align: center;">Move-In Assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VA case management team tries to assist with move-in funds and supplies. Security deposit funding is available through SSVF and City of Philadelphia Office of Supportive Housing. SSVF can also provide thrift store voucher for furniture purchase. 		

APPENDIX I: SUPPORTING DATA

CHARACTERISTICS OF HUD-VASH PARTICIPANTS

By Study Group

Exhibit I.1 Sample details, HUD-VASH participants, by study group

HUD-VASH participant count						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Houston	495	17.8	1,013	32.8	260	17.3
Los Angeles	1,643	58.9	1,251	40.5	873	57.9
Palo Alto	314	11.3	680	22.0	293	19.4
Philadelphia	336	12.0	144	4.7	81	5.4
Total	2,788	100	3,088	100	1,507	100
Year of program admission						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
2008 or before	49	1.8	85	2.8	1	0.1
2009	350	12.6	500	16.2	20	1.3
2010	489	17.6	668	21.6	43	2.9
2011	1,018	36.6	914	29.6	243	16.2
2012	832	29.9	585	18.9	338	22.5
2013	45	1.6	312	10.1	502	33.4
2014	0	0.0	24	0.8	356	23.7
Total	2,783	100	3,088	100	1,503	100
Days in HUD-VASH, by quartile						
			25%	50%	75%	Mean
Stayers						
Voucher issuance to end of observation period			917	1,153	1,462	1,230
Move-in to end of observation period			844	1,076	1,391	1,148
Leased-up exiters						
Voucher issuance to exit			433	651	968	731
Move-in to exit			365	573	889	658
Nonleased exiters						
Voucher issuance to exit			89	129	177	148
Years in HUD-VASH housing						
			Any		Leased-Up Exiters	
			N	%	N	%
1 year or longer			5,089	86.6	2,309	74.8
2 years or longer			3,551	60.4	1,116	36.1

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System (HOMES)

Exhibit I.2 Demographics, HUD-VASH participants, by study group

Gender						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	307	11.1	336	10.9	142	9.5
Male	2,469	88.9	2,738	89.1	1,349	90.5
Total	2,776	100	3,074	100	1,491	100
Age						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<35	233	8.4	357	11.6	229	15.4
35-44	269	9.7	366	11.9	190	12.7
45-54	1,006	36.2	1,045	34.0	417	28.0
55-64	1,025	36.9	1,087	35.4	501	33.6
≥65	243	8.8	219	7.1	154	10.3
Total	2,776	100	3,074	100	1,491	100
Race						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black or African American	1,627	60.4	1,721	57.4	634	44.6
White	925	34.3	1,105	36.8	683	48.0
Other	141	5.2	173	5.8	106	7.4
Total	2,693	100	2,999	100	1,423	100
Ethnicity						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hispanic/Latino	189	7.0	234	7.7	148	10.2
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	2,500	92.1	2,758	91.2	1,278	88.1
Multiple	25	0.9	32	1.1	24	1.7
Total	2,714	100	3,024	100	1,450	100
Marital status						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	286	10.3	360	11.7	207	13.9
Widowed	80	2.9	90	2.9	38	2.6
Separated	252	9.1	310	10.1	141	9.5
Divorced	1,048	37.9	1,372	44.7	554	37.3
Never married	1,099	39.7	939	30.6	546	36.7
Total	2,765	100	3,071	100	1,486	100
VA enrollment priority group						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
≥50% service-connected disability	476	17.2	824	26.9	398	26.9
<50% service-connected disability	528	19.0	552	18.0	262	17.7
No service-connected disability; Medicaid-eligible	1,653	59.6	1,510	49.3	736	49.8
No service-connected disability; Not Medicaid-eligible	3	0.1	4	0.1	5	0.3
Other	114	4.1	174	5.7	76	5.1
Total	2,774	100	3,064	100	1,477	100

Source: VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.3 Military history, HUD-VASH participants, by study group

Period of service	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
World War II	7	0.3	9	0.3	4	0.3
Korean War	44	1.6	24	0.8	14	0.9
Vietnam Era	1,097	39.5	1,197	38.9	480	32.2
Post-Vietnam	993	35.8	980	31.9	444	29.8
Persian Gulf War	574	20.7	796	25.9	508	34.1
Other	61	2.2	68	2.2	40	2.7
Total	2,776	100	3,074	100	1,490	100
OEI/OIF deployment	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	2,653	95.6	2,874	93.5	1,314	88.1
Yes	123	4.4	200	6.5	177	11.9
Total	2,776	100	3,074	100	1,491	100
Combat exposure	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	2,687	96.8	2,928	95.3	1,427	95.7
Yes	89	3.2	146	4.7	64	4.3
Total	2,776	100	3,074	100	1,491	100

Source: VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.4 Medical and mental/behavioral health conditions, HUD-VASH participants, by study group

Medical conditions	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Any medical condition	703	25.3	853	27.7	388	26.0
Hypertension	378	13.6	452	14.7	203	13.6
Diabetes, uncomplicated	151	5.4	181	5.9	64	4.3
Chronic pulmonary disease	111	4.0	142	4.6	72	4.8
Obesity	106	3.8	144	4.7	50	3.4
Traumatic brain injury	4	0.1	12	0.4	5	0.3
Mental/behavioral health conditions	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Any mental/behavioral health condition	931	33.5	1243	40.4	564	37.8
Post-traumatic stress disorder	165	5.9	251	8.2	158	10.6
Depression	315	11.3	420	13.7	191	12.8
Psychoses	327	11.8	456	14.8	247	16.6
Schizophrenia	212	7.6	332	10.8	176	11.8
Alcohol abuse	435	15.7	594	19.3	299	20.1
Drug abuse	592	21.3	818	26.6	355	23.8
Suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury	100	3.6	169	5.5	92	6.2

Source: VA Medical Record

*By Study Site***Exhibit I.5 Sample details, HUD-VASH participants, by study site**

HUD-VASH participant count								
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Stayers	495	28.0	1,643	43.6	314	24.4	336	59.9
Leased-up exiters	1,013	57.3	1,251	33.2	680	52.8	144	25.7
Nonleased exiters	260	14.7	873	23.2	293	22.8	81	14.4
Total	1,768	100	3,767	100	1,287	100	561	100
Year of program admission								
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2008 or before	30	1.7	59	1.6	23	1.8	23	4.1
2009	163	9.2	563	14.9	46	3.6	98	17.5
2010	339	19.2	435	11.6	318	24.8	108	19.3
2011	424	24.0	1,373	36.5	258	20.1	120	21.5
2012	458	25.9	798	21.2	363	28.3	136	24.3
2013	293	16.6	317	8.4	198	15.5	51	9.1
2014	61	3.5	221	5.9	75	5.9	23	4.1
Total	1,768	100	3,766	100	1,281	100	559	100

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System (HOMES)

Exhibit I.6 Demographics, HUD-VASH participants, by study site

Gender								
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	267	15.2	329	8.8	101	7.9	88	15.8
Male	1,493	84.8	3,423	91.2	1,172	92.1	468	84.2
Total	1,760	100	3,752	100	1,273	100	556	100
Age								
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<35	234	13.3	414	11.0	117	9.2	54	9.7
35-44	255	14.5	388	10.3	121	9.5	61	11.0
45-54	614	34.9	1,168	31.1	487	38.3	199	35.8
55-64	590	33.5	1,391	37.1	426	33.5	206	37.1
≥65	67	3.8	391	10.4	122	9.6	36	6.5
Total	1,760	100	3,752	100	1,273	100	556	100
Race								
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black or African American	1,215	69.5	2,035	56.4	337	27.6	395	73.0
White	455	26.0	1,338	37.1	793	64.9	127	23.5
Other	77	4.4	233	6.5	91	7.5	19	3.5
Total	1,747	100	3,606	100	1,221	100	541	100.0

Exhibit I.6 Demographics, HUD-VASH participants, by study site

Ethnicity								
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hispanic/Latino	69	3.9	337	9.3	153	12.3	12	2.2
Non-Hispanic/Non-Lation	1,670	95.3	3,268	89.7	1,064	85.5	534	97.3
Multiple	13	0.7	37	1.0	28	2.2	3	0.5
Total	1,752	100	3,642	100	1,245	100	549	100
Marital status								
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	229	13.0	430	11.5	134	10.5	60	10.8
Widowed	57	3.2	83	2.2	48	3.8	20	3.6
Separated	206	11.7	339	9.1	85	6.7	73	13.2
Divorced	792	45.1	1,402	37.5	611	48.1	169	30.5
Never married	474	27.0	1,485	39.7	393	30.9	232	41.9
Total	1,758	100	3,739	100	1,271	100	554	100
VA enrollment priority group								
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
≥50% service-connected disability	361	20.6	912	24.4	311	24.5	114	20.7
<50% service-connected disability	407	23.2	638	17.1	208	16.4	89	16.1
No service-connected disability; Medicaid-eligible	883	50.3	2,010	53.7	691	54.5	315	57.1
No service-connected disability; Not Medicaid-eligible	5	0.3	3	0.1	2	0.2	2	0.4
Other	98	5.6	178	4.8	56	4.4	32	5.8
Total	1,754	100	3,741	100	1,268	100	552	100

Source: VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.7 Military history, HUD-VASH participants, by study site

Period of service								
	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
World War II	1	0.1	15	0.4	3	0.2	1	0.2
Korean War	4	0.2	59	1.6	15	1.2	4	0.7
Vietnam Era	572	32.5	1,492	39.8	478	37.5	232	41.7
Post-Vietnam	556	31.6	1,212	32.3	453	35.6	196	35.3
Persian Gulf War	597	33.9	878	23.4	288	22.6	115	20.7
Other	30	1.7	95	2.5	36	2.8	8	1.4
Total	1,760	100	3,751	100	1,273	100	556	100

Exhibit I.7 Military history, HUD-VASH participants, by study site

OEF/OIF deployment

	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	1,638	93.1	3,504	93.4	1,174	92.2	525	94.4
Yes	122	6.9	248	6.6	99	7.8	31	5.6
Total	1,760	100	3,752	100	1,273	100	556	100

Combat exposure

	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	1,677	95.3	3,626	96.6	1,204	94.6	535	96.2
Yes	83	4.7	126	3.4	69	5.4	21	3.8
Total	1,760	100	3,752	100	1,273	100	556	100

Source: VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.8 Medical and mental/behavioral health conditions, HUD-VASH participants, by study site

Medical conditions

	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Any medical condition	446	25.3	954	25.4	396	31.1	148	26.6
Hypertension	246	14.0	490	13.1	214	16.8	83	14.9
Diabetes, uncomplicated	85	4.8	193	5.1	83	6.5	35	6.3
Chronic pulmonary disease	54	3.1	175	4.7	68	5.3	28	5.0
Obesity	51	2.9	181	4.8	54	4.2	14	2.5
Traumatic brain injury	2	0.1	14	0.4	5	0.4	0	0.0

Mental/behavioral health conditions

	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Any mental/behavioral health condition	735	41.8	1249	33.3	573	45.0	181	32.6
Post-traumatic stress disorder	100	5.7	286	7.6	153	12.0	35	6.3
Depression	237	13.5	431	11.5	196	15.4	62	11.2
Psychoses	293	16.6	419	11.2	246	19.3	72	12.9
Schizophrenia	223	12.7	289	7.7	160	12.6	48	8.6
Alcohol abuse	342	19.4	542	14.4	346	27.2	98	17.6
Drug abuse	551	31.3	714	19.0	377	29.6	123	22.1
Suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury	132	7.5	89	2.4	104	8.2	36	6.5

Source: VA Medical Record

FEATURES OF STUDY SITES

Exhibit I.9 Adult population, 2013

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Overall	3,148,444	7,690,569	4,652,993	1,259,073
Veterans	162,451	295,347	236,174	68,553
% Veterans	5.2	3.8	5.1	5.4
Overall poverty rate	15.2	16.4	12.1	24.0
Veteran poverty rate	8.3	9.6	7.4	11.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Exhibit I.10 Homeless population, 2009-2014

Homeless population – 2009				
	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
All homeless	10,881	47,247	18,494	8,729
Unsheltered	4,068	32,948	10,272	756
Sheltered	6,812	14,299	8,222	7,973
Veterans	1,171	7,052	2,106	509
Unsheltered	517	5,056	1,252	78
Sheltered	654	1,997	854	431
Chronic	2,109	10,269	5,095	785
Unsheltered	1,356	7,949	4,257	446
Sheltered	753	2,320	838	339
Homeless population – 2010				
	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
All homeless	9,732	46,984	18,360	8,417
Unsheltered	4,184	32,372	10,272	863
Sheltered	5,548	14,612	8,088	7,554
Veterans	1,125	6,899	2,039	481
Unsheltered	562	4,766	1,249	85
Sheltered	563	2,133	790	396
Chronic	2,025	10,416	5,083	730
Unsheltered	1,435	7,897	4,257	397
Sheltered	590	2,519	826	333
Homeless population – 2011				
	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
All homeless	12,038	45,042	18,614	8,783
Unsheltered	6,830	28,298	11,468	719
Sheltered	5,208	16,744	7,146	8,064
Veterans	1,574	7,375	1,702	472
Unsheltered	1,019	4,507	1,210	84
Sheltered	554	2,867	492	388
Chronic	2,655	10,969	5,325	801
Unsheltered	2,053	8,591	4,673	415
Sheltered	602	2,378	652	387

Exhibit I.10 Homeless population, 2009-2014

Homeless population – 2012				
	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
All homeless	10,429	42,038	17,558	8,092
Unsheltered	6,162	28,234	11,468	702
Sheltered	4,267	13,804	6,090	7,390
Veterans	1,522	5,867	1,550	512
Unsheltered	1,052	4,468	1,210	100
Sheltered	470	1,398	340	412
Chronic	1,966	10,017	5,383	735
Unsheltered	1,719	8,554	4,673	446
Sheltered	248	1,462	709	289
Homeless population – 2013				
	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
All homeless	9,153	51,193	18,996	7,975
Unsheltered	4,670	37,970	12,980	794
Sheltered	4,483	13,223	6,016	7,182
Veterans	1,259	5,776	1,782	534
Unsheltered	645	4,425	1,305	101
Sheltered	614	1,351	477	433
Chronic	1,820	14,900	5,707	851
Unsheltered	1,454	13,354	4,923	481
Sheltered	365	1,546	784	370
Homeless population – 2014				
	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
All homeless	8,067	35,090	18,955	8,803
Unsheltered	3,982	23,005	12,778	507
Sheltered	4,085	12,085	6,177	8,296
Veterans	839	3,627	1,855	525
Unsheltered	453	2,517	1,290	31
Sheltered	387	1,111	565	494
Chronic	1,350	9,390	5,620	1,049
Unsheltered	1,107	7,976	4,846	297
Sheltered	243	1,414	774	753

Source: Point-in-Time Count

Exhibit I.11 Rental market, 2013

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Median rent	\$872	\$1,205	\$1,397	\$912
Rent-occupied housing (% of housing units that are occupied by renters)	45.7	54.5	45.0	49.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Exhibit I.12 HUD-VASH program characteristicsHUD-VASH voucher allocation, 2008-2014[Ⓢ]

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
2008	385	840	70	105
2009	280	455	210	140
2010	125	650	250	100
2011	125	425	150	75
2012	200	950	250	135
2013	277	819	265	65
2014	303	930	283	123
Total	1,695	5,069	1,478	743

HUD-VASH average days to placement in permanent housing, 2009-2014[Ⓢ]

	Houston			Los Angeles			Palo Alto			Philadelphia		
	All	N-CH	CH	All	N-CH	CH	All	N-CH	CH	All	N-CH	CH
Referral to admission	34.3	33.1	36.9	54.6	51.7	57.8	63.4	92.5	55.2	25.5	23.0	30.6
Admission to HA referral	9.6	10.5	7.7	38.8	43.4	33.6	26.7	23.3	27.6	19.0	20.6	15.8
HA referral to receipt of voucher	4.4	4.5	4.1	40.8	42.6	38.9	21.0	24.3	20.1	22.6	23.9	19.9
Receipt of voucher to move-in	63.8	63.0	65.8	87.6	87.2	88.1	66.5	58.6	68.7	81.2	82.7	78.2
Referral to move-in	112.1	111.1	114.4	221.8	224.9	218.4	177.6	198.8	171.6	148.3	150.2	144.4
Admission to move-in	77.9	78.0	77.5	167.2	173.2	160.6	114.2	106.3	116.5	122.7	127.2	113.9

VA performance measures, 2014[Ⓢ]

	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	2013 %	2014 %	2013 %	2014 %	2013 %	2014 %	2013 %	2014 %
% vouchers resulting in housing	88.5	93.1	86.1	90.3	97.9	92.7	89.0	91.5
% housed within 90 days	74.6	63.5	22.7	40.2	44.4	40.1	37.5	51.9
% chronic	68.0	84.2	66.1	80.0	73.4	78.1	76.4	83.0

Targeted/prioritized populations[Ⓢ]

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Homeless continuously for 1 year or longer	X	X	X	X
4+ episodes of homelessness over 3 years	X	X	X	X
Veterans at risk for becoming homeless	-	-	X	-
Females	-	X	X	-
OEF/OIF/OND Veterans	-	X	X	X
Young adults, ages 18-25	-	-	X	-
Older adults, ages 55 and over	-	X	X	-
Families	-	X	X	X
Substance abuse or dependence only	-	-	X	-
Mentally ill only	-	-	X	-
Co-occurring substance use and mental illness	-	X	X	X

Barriers impacting implementation and/or service delivery[Ⓢ] (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree)

	Houston	Los Angeles	Palo Alto	Philadelphia
Difficulties hiring qualified staff	5	4	1	3
Difficulties retaining qualified staff	5	4	5	2
Shortfall in recruiting or enrolling target Veterans	4	4	4	4
Veteran reluctance to access HUD-VASH services	4	4	4	2

Exhibit I.12 HUD-VASH program characteristics

Difficulties retaining target Veterans in HUD-VASH program	2	4	4	2
Difficulties following up with Veterans in HUD-VASH program	2	4	4	2
Difficulties providing services as planned	2	4	4	5
Existing agency rules or regulations	2	4	5	1

Sources: [⊙] HUD (2014b), [⊗] Northeast Program Evaluation Center, [⊕] VHA Support Service Center, [°] Staff Interview/Pre-Interview Questionnaire

PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT AND HOUSING PROCESS**Exhibit I.13 Days to placement in permanent housing, HUD-VASH participants**

	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Assessment to admission	46.34	82.19	47.71	94.42	45.01	103.48
Admission to HA referral**	30.46	97.49	25.77	89.81	22.59	68.54
HA referral to receipt of voucher***	34.03	42.66	27.55	36.06	31.29	32.05
Voucher receipt to housing selection***	53.29	53.99	47.68	57.34	57.69	49.20
Housing selection to inspection	16.97	24.45	15.95	23.96	20.12	20.82
Inspection to execution of HAP Contract***	11.12	14.23	9.35	13.05	9.38	13.37
Execution of HAP Contract to move-in	8.26	26.29	8.05	25.87	NA	NA
Admission to receipt of voucher***	64.50	106.25	53.28	97.53	52.96	72.65
Receipt of voucher to move-in***	82.32	62.42	72.93	63.12	NA	NA
Admission to move-in***	146.85	124.54	126.23	117.77	NA	NA

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System **p≤0.05, ***p≤0.01

Exhibit I.14 Multiple regression analysis for days between admission and HA referral, HUD-VASH participants^a (N=6,055)

	Estimate	SE	t-value	p
Intercept	12.631	0.793	15.936	0.000
Houston	-3.105	0.376	-8.252	0.000
Palo Alto	-0.644	0.379	-1.701	0.089
Philadelphia	1.274	0.506	2.519	0.012
Leased-Up Exiter	0.695	0.301	2.309	0.021
Nonleased Exiter	1.103	0.446	2.473	0.013
Age	0.031	0.013	2.373	0.018
Male	-0.844	0.462	-1.827	0.068
White	-0.413	0.297	-1.390	0.165
Other race	-0.508	0.582	-0.874	0.382
Service-connected disability	-0.021	0.281	-0.073	0.942
Housing First	0.097	0.499	0.194	0.847
VA case management contact between admission and HA referral (monthly average)	-0.219	0.009	-25.556	0.000

^a Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Study group—Stayers; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability; Housing First—Pre-Housing First.

Note: Adjusted R²=0.166

Bold font indicates p≤0.05

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.15 Multiple regression analysis for days between HA referral and receipt of voucher, HUD-VASH participants^a (N=6,102)

	Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	p
Intercept	38.649	1.506	25.670	0.000
Houston	-23.967	0.738	-32.461	0.000
Palo Alto	-2.342	0.712	-3.292	0.001
Philadelphia	-12.661	1.062	-11.922	0.000
Leased-Up Exiter	-0.419	0.572	-0.732	0.464
Nonleased Exiter	2.088	0.923	2.263	0.024
Age	-0.058	0.025	-2.335	0.020
Male	0.626	0.877	0.714	0.475
White	-0.257	0.562	-0.457	0.648
Other race	1.369	1.127	1.215	0.225
Service-connected disability	1.450	0.547	2.650	0.008
Housing First	-7.162	0.989	-7.238	0.000
VA case management contact between HA referral and receipt of voucher (monthly average)	-0.411	0.037	-11.245	0.000

^a Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Study group—Stayers; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability; Housing First—Pre-Housing First.

Note: Adjusted R²=0.255

Bold font indicates p≤0.05

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.16 Multiple regression analysis for days between receipt of voucher and move-in, HUD-VASH participants^a (N=5,308)

	Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	p
Intercept	93.286	3.438	27.132	0.000
Houston	-17.753	1.471	-12.070	0.000
Palo Alto	-11.865	1.767	-6.714	0.000
Philadelphia	-8.317	2.568	-3.238	0.001
Leased-Up Exiter	-2.217	1.230	-1.802	0.072
Age	-0.120	0.058	-2.076	0.038
Male	-0.118	1.989	-0.059	0.953
White	-3.547	1.288	-2.755	0.006
Other race	-3.463	2.615	-1.324	0.186
Service-connected disability	2.446	1.240	1.972	0.049
Housing First	-13.591	2.526	-5.380	0.000
VA case management contact between receipt of voucher and move-in (monthly average)	-2.913	0.232	-12.537	0.000

^a Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Study group—Stayers; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability; Housing First—Pre-Housing First.

Note: Adjusted R²=0.090

Bold font indicates p≤0.05

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.17 Multiple regression analysis for days between admission and receipt of voucher, HUD-VASH participants^a (N=5,724)

	Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	p
Intercept	60.969	2.681	22.742	0.000
Houston	-35.310	1.652	-21.376	0.000
Palo Alto	-6.384	1.263	-5.056	0.000
Philadelphia	-14.179	1.825	-7.768	0.000
Leased-Up Exiter	-0.394	0.996	-0.395	0.693
Nonleased Exiter	5.414	1.597	3.390	0.001
Age	-0.006	0.043	-0.138	0.890
Male	-0.892	1.604	-0.556	0.578
White	-1.573	0.996	-1.580	0.114
Other race	1.102	1.937	0.569	0.569
Service-connected disability	1.258	0.952	1.322	0.186
Housing First	-12.796	1.798	-7.115	0.000
VA case management contact between admission and HA referral (monthly average)	-0.252	0.032	-7.905	0.000
VA case management contact between HA referral and receipt of voucher (monthly average)	-0.656	0.098	-6.665	0.000

^a Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Study group—Stayers; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability; Housing First—Pre-Housing First.

Note: Adjusted R²=0.211

Bold font indicates p≤0.05

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.18 Multiple regression analysis for days between admission and move-in, HUD-VASH participants^a (N=4,882)

	Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	p
Intercept	71.230	3.944	18.062	0.000
Houston	-38.811	2.460	-15.779	0.000
Palo Alto	-10.627	1.999	-5.317	0.000
Philadelphia	-15.501	2.975	-5.210	0.000
Leased-Up Exiter	-0.598	1.387	-0.431	0.666
Age	-0.014	0.065	-0.215	0.830
Male	-3.516	2.369	-1.484	0.138
White	-0.789	1.485	-0.531	0.595
Other race	-1.555	2.923	-0.532	0.595
Service-connected disability	1.851	1.418	1.306	0.192
Housing First	-10.769	3.574	-3.013	0.003
VA case management contact between admission and HA referral (monthly average)	-0.373	0.048	-7.725	0.000
VA case management contact between HA referral and receipt of voucher (monthly average)	-0.780	0.169	-4.623	0.000
VA case management contact between receipt of voucher and move-in (monthly average)	-0.505	0.299	-1.687	0.092

^a Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Study group—Stayers; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability; Housing First—Pre-Housing First.

Note: Adjusted R²=0.158

Bold font indicates p≤0.05

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.19 Living situation during HUD-VASH housing process, study respondents

Living situation at voucher receipt	Stayers		Leased-up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Emergency shelter	38	10.5	2	2.6	6	12.0
Place not meant for human habitation	41	11.4	9	11.5	9	18.0
Permanent housing	28	7.8	5	6.4	4	8.0
Transitional housing for homeless person	86	23.8	22	28.2	7	14.0
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	85	23.5	16	20.5	8	16.0
Family member or friend's room, apartment or house	72	19.9	19	24.4	14	28.0
Other	11	3.0	5	6.4	2	4.0
Total	361	100	78	100	50	100

Living situation at apartment selection	Stayers		Leased-up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Emergency shelter	36	10.0	1	1.3	1	5.9
Place not meant for human habitation	38	10.6	9	11.7	6	35.3
Permanent housing	29	8.1	7	9.1	1	5.9
Transitional housing for homeless person	86	23.9	21	27.3	1	5.9
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	80	22.2	16	20.8	3	17.6
Family member or friend's room, apartment or house	79	21.9	17	22.1	4	23.5
Other	12	3.3	6	7.8	1	5.9
Total	360	100	77	100	17	100

Source: Veteran Survey

Exhibit I.20 HUD-VASH enrollment and housing process, study respondents

Ease of HUD-VASH enrollment and housing process (1 = very difficult, 5 = very easy)	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Enrolling in the HUD-VASH program	4.02	1.19	3.98	1.14	3.81	1.16
Submitting applications to HA***	4.01	1.13	3.90	1.15	3.41	1.41
Providing documentation of identity and income to HA***	4.14	1.16	4.18	0.97	3.60	1.44
Finding listings of available apartments	3.89	1.28	3.65	1.33	NA	NA
Finding an acceptable apartment option	3.36	1.46	3.48	1.45	NA	NA
Getting an apartment inspected by HA	4.05	1.17	3.96	1.10	NA	NA
Being selected as a tenant by a landlord	4.17	1.20	4.20	1.12	NA	NA
Obtaining money for rent, security deposit, moving costs	3.62	1.36	3.74	1.24	NA	NA

Steps completed in the housing process by Nonleased exitters before exit	Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%
Finding listing of available apartments	34	61.8
Finding an acceptable apartment option	25	43.1
Getting an apartment inspected by HA	5	8.6
Being selected as a tenant by a landlord	9	15.5
Obtaining money for rent, security deposit, moving costs	13	22.4

Source: Veteran Survey

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Exhibit I.21 Housing selection, study respondents

Number of apartments visited during housing search

	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	4	1.1	1	1.3	18	34.0
One	104	28.1	21	26.6	5	9.4
Two	52	14.1	14	17.7	2	3.8
Three	56	15.1	12	15.2	2	3.8
Four or more	154	41.6	31	39.2	26	49.1
Total	370	100	79	100	53	100

Proportion of “acceptable” apartments*

	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	70.92	33.53	68.41	33.40	42.40	35.15

Reason for apartment choice

	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Location/neighborhood	234	63.4	51	65.4	NA	NA
Good repair/quality	27	7.3	3	3.8	NA	NA
Particular features of apartment	56	15.2	10	12.8	NA	NA
I didn't have a choice	52	14.1	14	17.9	NA	NA
Total	369	100	78	100	NA	NA

Comfort during first few nights in apartment

	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not comfortable	38	10.3	10	12.5	NA	NA
Moderately comfortable	116	31.4	18	22.5	NA	NA
Very comfortable	216	58.4	52	65.0	NA	NA
Total	370	100	80	100	NA	NA

Source: Veteran Survey

Exhibit I.22 Services received during housing process and move-in, study respondents

	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Assistance getting and receiving appointment with HA	301	81.4	66	82.5	47	83.9
Assistance providing proof of identity or income	171	46.2	36	45.0	26	44.8
Assistance completing and submitting HA application	263	71.3	59	73.8	37	66.1
Assistance finding apartment options	170	46.1	35	43.8	15	26.3
Assistance getting essential move-in items	107	29.0	32	40.0	NA	NA
Assistance moving belongings into the apartment	58	15.7	17	21.3	NA	NA
Assistance setting up utilities	31	8.4	4	5.1	NA	NA

Source: Veteran Survey

Exhibit I.23 Housing satisfaction while in HUD-VASH and after exit, study respondents (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = completely satisfied)

Housing satisfaction while in HUD-VASH						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Apartment condition	3.78	1.16	3.81	1.13	NA	NA
Affordability	3.84	1.16	3.89	1.16	NA	NA
Building safety and security	3.61	1.23	3.59	1.33	NA	NA
Access to shopping*	4.10	0.97	3.86	1.13	NA	NA
Access to public transportation**	4.31	0.90	4.01	1.15	NA	NA
Neighborhood safety	3.60	1.24	3.39	1.28	NA	NA
Opportunities to socialize	3.63	1.20	3.47	1.23	NA	NA
Housing satisfaction after exit						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Apartment condition***	NA	NA	3.73	1.10	2.98	1.46
Affordability	NA	NA	3.91	1.19	3.67	1.47
Building safety and security*	NA	NA	3.88	1.12	3.31	1.44
Access to shopping	NA	NA	3.83	1.17	3.49	1.26
Access to public transportation	NA	NA	3.76	1.17	3.96	0.94
Neighborhood safety***	NA	NA	3.91	1.13	3.30	1.43
Opportunities to socialize***	NA	NA	3.79	1.26	3.09	1.38
Difference in housing satisfaction of leased-up exiters while in HUD-VASH and after						
	HUD-VASH		Exit	Difference		
	M		M	%		
Apartment condition	3.81		3.73	-1.6		
Affordability	3.89		3.91	0.4		
Building safety and security	3.59		3.88	5.8		
Access to shopping	3.86		3.83	-0.6		
Access to public transportation	4.01		3.76	-5.0		
Neighborhood safety	3.39		3.91	10.4		
Opportunities to socialize	3.47		3.79	6.4		

Source: Veteran Survey

*p≤0.10, **p≤0.05, ***p≤0.01

Exhibit I.24 Program satisfaction, study respondents

Veteran believes HUD-VASH was a good fit for his/her needs

	Stayers		Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	354	95.9	72	90.0	51	87.9
No	15	4.1	8	10.0	7	12.1
Total	369	100	80	100	58	100

Reason Veteran does not believe HUD-VASH was a good fit for his/her needs

	Stayers		Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Veteran did not need as much support as offered	0	0.0	2	28.6	1	14.3
Veteran needed more support than offered	5	31.3	4	57.1	1	14.3
Program had more rules than acceptable to Veteran	4	25.0	0	0.0	1	14.3
Housing unit did not fit Veteran's needs	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3
Other	7	43.8	1	14.3	3	42.9
Total	16	100.0	7	100.0	7	100.1

Source: Veteran Survey

VA CASE MANAGEMENT

Exhibit I.25 Frequency of VA case management

HUD-VASH participants ^o						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
30 days prior to admission**	1.06	1.86	0.95	1.57	1.08	1.63
Between admission and HA referral (monthly average)	8.96	14.61	9.54	16.72	9.69	15.96
Between HA referral and receipt of voucher (monthly average)	3.54	8.03	4.22	9.43	4.08	7.82
Between receipt of voucher and move-in (monthly average)	2.52	3.88	2.45	3.53	NA	NA
30 days post-move-in	1.93	2.82	2.01	2.75	NA	NA
31-60 days post-move-in	1.59	2.56	1.54	2.41	NA	NA
61-90 days post-move-in	1.49	2.43	1.52	2.25	NA	NA
91-180 days post-move-in (monthly average)	1.45	2.47	1.43	1.86	NA	NA
181 – 360 days post-move-in (monthly average)*	1.41	2.03	1.32	1.41	NA	NA
361-720 days post-move-in (monthly average)***	0.88	1.31	1.22	1.40	NA	NA
Self-reported number of monthly meetings with VA case manager, study respondents ^o						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Do not meet with case manager	22	6.1	4	5.0	3	5.5
Less than once per month	70	19.3	12	15.0	1	1.8
Once per month	215	59.2	45	56.3	14	25.5
One to two times per month	40	11.0	11	13.8	18	32.7
More than twice per month	16	4.4	8	10.0	19	34.5
Total	363	100	80	100	55	100

Sources: ^oVA Medical Record, ^oVeteran Survey *p≤0.10, **p≤0.05, ***p≤0.01

Exhibit I.26 VA case management satisfaction, study respondents (1 = never, 5 = always)

	Stayers		Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
My case manager was able to help me***	4.30	0.93	3.86	1.25	3.56	1.30
My case manager and I agreed on goals***	4.39	0.83	3.74	1.35	3.92	1.10
My case manager and I had the same ideas about what my problems were	4.01	1.18	3.89	1.22	4.19	1.10
My case manager and I trusted each other***	4.46	0.96	3.95	1.40	4.15	1.11

Source: Veteran Survey *p≤0.10, **p≤0.05, ***p≤0.01

VA HEALTH SERVICES UTILIZATION

Exhibit I.27 VA services utilization, HUD-VASH participants

90 days prior to entry						
	Stayers		Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Outpatient						
Medical**	5.37	10.73	6.02	11.02	4.83	10.15
Mental/behavioral health***	4.05	7.67	4.61	8.19	3.16	6.44
Substance use***	3.81	13.76	4.40	12.66	2.25	10.28
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inpatient						
Medical	130	4.9	168	5.7	91	6.4
Mental/behavioral health*	111	4.2	159	5.4	75	5.3
Substance use**	97	3.6	153	5.2	71	5.0
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Average inpatient length of stay						
Medical	18.34	43.38	19.67	53.06	20.77	49.94
Mental/behavioral health	31.22	65.36	28.03	54.02	30.25	59.09
Substance use	27.62	52.18	26.39	51.49	22.79	46.40
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Emergency care***	453	17.0	622	21.0	305	21.4
90 days post entry						
	Stayers		Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Outpatient						
Medical**	4.59	9.08	4.68	8.51	3.98	8.70
Mental/behavioral health***	3.73	7.96	4.13	8.07	2.56	5.99
Substance use***	2.92	12.09	3.15	10.60	1.63	8.42
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inpatient						
Medical**	101	3.6	156	5.1	68	4.7
Mental/behavioral health**	83	3.0	129	4.2	60	4.1
Substance use***	61	2.2	92	3.0	65	4.5
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Average inpatient length of stay						
Medical	18.32	48.17	22.90	61.76	21.18	51.38
Mental/behavioral health	33.63	61.67	36.97	68.11	26.74	60.95
Substance use	23.43	53.75	19.77	43.60	23.18	50.97
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Emergency care***	404	14.6	534	17.4	307	21.2
90 days post move-in						
	Stayers		Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Outpatient						
Medical	3.46	7.48	3.37	7.60	NA	NA
Mental/behavioral health	2.72	6.72	2.99	6.91	NA	NA
Substance use	1.98	9.61	2.01	8.49	NA	NA
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inpatient						
Medical*	79	2.8	112	3.7	NA	NA
Mental/behavioral health	61	2.2	81	2.7	NA	NA

Exhibit I.27 VA services utilization, HUD-VASH participants

Substance use**	35	1.3	61	2.0	NA	NA
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Average inpatient length of stay						
Medical	23.13	68.95	17.98	55.28	NA	NA
Mental/behavioral health***	57.47	103.87	33.61	74.51	NA	NA
Substance use	20.39	54.87	18.71	58.09	NA	NA
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Emergency care***	314	11.3	472	15.8	NA	NA
90 days pre-exit						
			Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
			M	SD	M	SD
Outpatient						
Medical			3.34	9.03	3.15	6.91
Mental/behavioral health			1.52	5.13	1.79	5.76
Substance use			0.88	5.83	0.94	5.64
			N	%	N	%
Inpatient						
Medical			136	4.5	47	4.3
Mental/behavioral health***			64	2.1	48	4.4
Substance use*			71	2.3	36	3.3
			M	SD	M	SD
Average inpatient length of stay						
Medical**			9.20	22.80	18.13	52.19
Mental/behavioral health***			10.02	30.28	29.15	71.61
Substance use*			9.81	35.74	18.88	56.59
			N	%	N	%
Emergency care			502	16.5	194	17.9
30 days post-exit						
			Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
			M	SD	M	SD
Outpatient						
Medical**			0.87	3.21	1.12	3.87
Mental/behavioral health***			0.45	1.78	0.61	2.23
Substance use			0.28	2.21	0.23	1.65
			N	%	N	%
Inpatient						
Medical			54	1.8	36	2.5
Mental/behavioral health			39	1.3	23	1.6
Substance use**			40	1.3	33	2.3
			M	SD	M	SD
Average inpatient length of stay						
Medical**			8.71	25.35	22.94	63.82
Mental/behavioral health			14.44	40.14	20.35	51.94
Substance use			20.33	58.70	23.52	61.65
			N	%	N	%
Emergency care**			151	5.1	97	6.8
31-90 days post-exit						
			Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
			M	SD	M	SD
Outpatient						

Exhibit I.27 VA services utilization, HUD-VASH participants				
Medical	1.68	5.05	1.79	5.18
Mental/behavioral health	0.83	3.44	0.90	2.69
Substance use*	0.59	4.11	0.36	2.67
	N	%	N	%
Inpatient				
Medical*	66	2.4	43	3.3
Mental/behavioral health	46	1.7	30	2.3
Substance use**	40	1.4	32	2.5
	M	SD	M	SD
Average inpatient length of stay				
Medical**	7.51	23.40	20.21	55.22
Mental/behavioral health	13.98	35.85	12.18	36.16
Substance use	9.19	25.67	14.96	42.98
	N	%	N	%
Emergency care**	237	8.6	137	10.6
91-180 days post-exit				
	Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD
Outpatient				
Medical*	2.32	7.25	2.72	7.15
Mental/behavioral health	1.05	3.89	1.27	4.03
Substance use	0.79	5.47	0.58	4.21
	N	%	N	%
Inpatient				
Medical**	70	2.9	48	4.3
Mental/behavioral health	45	1.8	24	2.2
Substance use**	37	1.5	29	2.6
	M	SD	M	SD
Average inpatient length of stay				
Medical	5.67	19.71	9.62	23.73
Mental/behavioral health	12.56	32.47	10.28	29.06
Substance use*	10.48	32.29	21.38	56.10
	N	%	N	%
Emergency care	286	11.7	150	13.6
181-360 days post-exit				
	Leased-up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD
Outpatient				
Medical	4.72	10.95	4.67	10.69
Mental/behavioral health	2.17	6.47	2.34	6.51
Substance use	1.63	11.92	1.08	8.86
	N	%	N	%
Inpatient				
Medical	95	5.2	57	6.7
Mental/behavioral health	56	3.1	24	2.8
Substance use*	43	2.4	32	3.7
	M	SD	M	SD
Average inpatient length of stay				
Medical	7.03	22.29	5.94	13.01
Mental/behavioral health	7.42	25.20	8.77	29.06

Exhibit I.27 VA services utilization, HUD-VASH participants

Substance use	10.04	38.54	13.22	42.69
	N	%	N	%
Emergency care	340	18.7	168	19.7

Source: VA Medical Record

*p≤0.10, **p≤0.05, ***p≤0.01

Exhibit I.28 Self-reported health in HUD-VASH, study respondents

Self-reported health status						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Excellent	26	7.0	2	2.5	2	3.4
Very good	72	19.5	11	13.8	15	25.9
Good	128	34.6	30	37.5	13	22.4
Fair	114	30.8	31	38.8	20	34.5
Poor	30	8.1	6	7.5	8	13.8
Total	370	100	80	100	58	100
Self-reported medical problems						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Experienced serious medical problems	213	57.6	41	51.3	31	53.4
Hospitalized for medical problem	143	38.6	25	31.3	14	24.1
Experienced serious medical problems AND were hospitalized for medical problem	127	34.3	24	30.0	13	22.4
Self-reported mental health problems						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Experienced serious mental health problems	143	38.9	48	60.0	24	41.4
Hospitalized for mental health problem	37	10.0	12	15.0	6	10.3
Experienced serious mental health problems AND were hospitalized for mental health problem	33	8.9	12	15.0	5	8.6
Self-reported being "troubled" by drugs/alcohol						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all	253	68.6	43	53.8	37	63.8
Slightly	67	18.2	15	18.8	14	24.1
Moderately	34	9.2	8	10.0	3	5.2
Considerably	11	3.0	6	7.5	1	1.7
Extremely	4	1.1	8	10.0	3	5.2
Total	369	100.1	80	100.1	58	100.0
Self-reported drug/alcohol treatment						
	Stayers		Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inpatient	15	4.1	0	0.0	5	8.6
Outpatient	55	14.9	13	16.3	7	12.1
Both inpatient and outpatient	22	6.0	6	7.5	3	5.2
No treatment	276	75.0	61	76.3	43	74.1
Total	368	100	80	100	58	100

Source: Veteran Survey

EXITS FROM HUD-VASH

Exhibit I.29 Logistic regression modeling exits from HUD-VASH (leased-up exit vs. stay), HUD-VASH participants^a (N=5,850)

	Estimate	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	p
Intercept	-0.148	0.159	0.863	0.352
Houston	0.975	0.067	2.652	0.000
Palo Alto	1.066	0.081	2.903	0.000
Philadelphia	-0.553	0.107	0.575	0.000
Age	-0.008	0.003	0.992	0.002
Male	0.199	0.092	1.221	0.030
White	0.011	0.061	1.011	0.859
Other race	0.033	0.124	1.034	0.789
Service-connected disability	0.312	0.058	1.366	0.000

^a Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability.

Note: Nagelkerke R²=0.107

Bold font indicates p≤0.05

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System (HOMES), VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.30 Logistic regression modeling exits from HUD-VASH (Nonleased vs. leased-up exit), HUD-VASH participants^a (N=4,565)

	Estimate	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	p
Intercept	-0.270	0.183	0.763	0.139
Houston	-0.960	0.084	0.383	0.000
Palo Alto	-0.606	0.086	0.545	0.000
Philadelphia	-0.185	0.149	0.831	0.213
Age	-0.007	0.003	0.993	0.021
Male	0.085	0.112	1.088	0.451
White	0.434	0.070	1.544	0.000
Other race	0.373	0.134	1.452	0.005
Service-connected disability	-0.070	0.069	0.932	0.306
PTSD	0.226	0.111	1.254	0.042

^a Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability; PTSD—No diagnosis.

Note: Nagelkerke R²=0.065

Bold font indicates p≤0.05

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.31 Reasons for exits reported by VA case managers, HUD-VASH participants

	Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%
Accomplished goals or obtained access to services and no longer needs program	1,306	42.5	28	1.9
Cannot be located	91	3	247	16.6
Deceased	268	8.7	18	1.2
Evicted by HA or landlord or other housing issues	280	9.1	10	0.1
Found/chose other housing	248	8.1	212	14.2
Incarcerated	115	3.7	54	3.6
No longer financially eligible	151	4.9	90	6
No longer interested in participating in HUD-VASH	176	5.7	327	21.9
Noncompliance with HUD-VASH case management	82	2.7	151	10.1
Too ill to participate in HUD-VASH	48	1.6	25	1.7
Transferred to another HUD-VASH program site	46	1.5	31	2.1
Unhappy with HUD-VASH housing	16	0.5	NA	NA
Other	243	7.9	299	20
Total	3,070	100	1,855	100

Source: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System

Exhibit I.32 Reasons for exits identified by housing authority and VA staff

	Houston		Los Angeles		Palo Alto		Philadelphia	
	Leased-Up Exitters	Nonleased Exitters	Leased-Up Exitters	Nonleased Exitters	Leased-Up Exitters	Nonleased Exitters	Leased-Up Exitters	Nonleased Exitters
Challenging process	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X
Death	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-
Eviction	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Homeownership	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Housing preference	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Incarceration	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	-
Increase in income	X	-	-	X	X	X	X	X
Isolation	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-
Lease or program violations	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	-
Loss of contact	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
Mass briefings	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mental illness	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-
Motivation	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X
Move/port	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Noncompliance with VA case management	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nonpayment of rent	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Personal history (e.g., bad credit, poor rental record)	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Problem with housing unit	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Readiness	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	X
SUD	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	-
Unit abandonment	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-

Exhibit I.33 Reasons for exits, study respondents

Dissatisfaction with neighborhood	10	12.7	NA	NA
Evicted from apartment	16	20.3	NA	NA
Improvement in health condition	7	8.9	2	3.4
Improvement in mental health condition	6	7.6	1	1.7
Improvement in substance abuse condition	5	6.3	1	1.7
Increase in income	29	36.7	6	10.3
Legal trouble such as arrest, jail, warrant, probation, lawsuit or trial	7	8.9	3	5.2
Offer from family or friend to move into their housing	11	13.9	13	22.4
Voucher revoked by HA	9	11.4	15	26.3
Worsening in medical condition	11	13.9	9	15.5
Worsening in mental health condition	13	16.5	8	13.8
Worsening in substance abuse condition	15	19.0	6	10.3

Contributing factors to exit, mean (1=yes, 2=no)

	Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	M	SD	M	SD
Apartment that was found did not pass inspection	NA	NA	1.95	.223
Conflict with HUD-VASH case manager or other program staff	1.89	.320	1.91	.283
Conflict with landlord	1.81	.395	NA	NA
Conflict with neighbors	1.86	.348	NA	NA
Couldn't find an available apartment to rent with voucher	NA	NA	1.74	.442
Did not have money to pay for security deposit or furniture	NA	NA	1.84	.365
Difficulty paying the rent	1.76	.430	NA	NA
Disagreement with program rules	1.95	.221	1.90	.307
Dissatisfaction with apartment	1.86	.348	NA	NA
Dissatisfaction with available apartments	NA	NA	1.67	.473
Dissatisfaction with neighborhood	1.87	.335	NA	NA
Evicted from apartment	1.80	.404	NA	NA
Improvement in health condition	1.91	.286	1.97	.249
Improvement in mental health condition	1.92	.267	1.98	.131
Improvement in substance abuse condition	1.94	.245	1.98	.131
Increase in income***	1.63	.485	1.90	.307
Legal trouble such as arrest, jail, warrant, probation, lawsuit or trial	1.91	.286	1.95	.223
Offer from family or friend to move into their housing	1.86	.348	1.78	.421
Voucher revoked by HA**	1.89	.320	1.74	.444
Worsening in medical condition	1.86	.348	1.84	.365
Worsening in mental health condition	1.84	.373	1.86	.348
Worsening in substance abuse condition	1.81	.395	1.90	.307

Leased-up exiters' most common main exit reason categories with related contributing factors, %

	Leased-Up Exiters	
	N	%
Increase in income	20	27.0
Improvement in health condition	4	20.0

Exhibit I.33 Reasons for exits, study respondents

Improvement in mental health condition	3	15.0
Improvement in substance abuse condition	3	15.0
Worsening in medical, mental health or substance use condition	15	20.3
Conflict with HUD-VASH case manager or other program staff	2	13.3
Conflict with landlord	3	20.0
Conflict with neighbors	3	20.0
Difficulty paying the rent	5	33.3
Dissatisfaction with the apartment	3	20.0
Evicted from apartment	4	26.7
Voucher revoked by HA	3	20.0
Worsening in medical condition	7	46.7
Worsening in mental health condition	10	66.7
Worsening in substance use condition	9	60.0
Difficulty with housing (combination of conflict with landlord, conflict with neighbors, dissatisfaction with apartment and dissatisfaction with neighborhood)	9	12.2
Evicted from apartment	2	22.2
Increase in income	2	22.2

Nonleased exiters' most common main exit reason categories with related contributing factors, %

	Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%
Voucher revoked by HA	12	22.6
Couldn't find an available apartment to rent with voucher	3	25.0
Dissatisfaction with available apartments	2	16.7
Offer from family or friend to move into their housing	2	16.7
Difficulty with housing (combination of dissatisfaction with available apartments, couldn't find an available apartment to rent with voucher, and apartment that was found did not pass inspection)	11	20.8
Did not have money to pay for security deposit or furniture	2	18.2
Offer from family or friend to move into their housing	2	18.2
Worsening in medical condition	2	18.2
Offer from family or friend to move into their housing	8	15.1
Did not have money to pay for security deposit or furniture	2	25.0

Exit type

	Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%
I decided to leave	45	58.4	33	57.9
I was asked to leave	32	41.6	24	42.1
Total	77	100.0	57	100.0

Contributing factors to exit by exit type

	Leased-Up Exiters Decided to Leave		Leased-up Exiters Asked to Leave		Nonleased Exiters Decided to Leave		Nonleased Exiters Asked to Leave	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Apartment that was found did not pass inspection	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	3.0	2	8.3

Exhibit I.33 Reasons for exits, study respondents

Conflict with HUD-VASH case manager or other program staff	4	8.9	4	12.5	2	6.1	3	12.5
Conflict with landlord	5	11.1	10	31.3	NA	NA	NA	NA
Conflict with neighbors	5	11.1	6	18.8	NA	NA	NA	NA
Couldn't find an available apartment to rent with voucher	NA	NA	NA	NA	7	21.2	8	33.3
Did not have money to pay for security deposit or furniture	NA	NA	NA	NA	7	21.2	2	8.3
Difficulty paying the rent	4	8.9	14	43.8	NA	NA	NA	NA
Disagreement with program rules	1	2.2	3	9.4	3	9.1	3	12.5
Dissatisfaction with apartment	8	17.8	3	9.4	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dissatisfaction with available apartments	NA	NA	NA	NA	14	42.4	5	20.8
Dissatisfaction with neighborhood	7	15.6	3	9.4	NA	NA	NA	NA
Evicted from apartment	0	0.0	16	50.0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Improvement in health condition	5	11.1	2	6.3	1	3.0	1	4.2
Improvement in mental health condition	4	8.9	2	6.3	1	3.0	0	0.0
Improvement in substance abuse condition	4	8.9	1	3.1	1	3.0	0	0.0
Increase in income	21	46.7	7	21.9	4	12.1	2	8.3
Legal trouble such as arrest, jail, warrant, probation, lawsuit or trial	1	2.2	6	18.8	0	0.0	3	12.5
Offer from family or friend to move into their housing	10	22.2	1	3.1	11	33.3	2	8.3
Voucher revoked by HA	2	4.4	7	21.9	2	6.3	12	50.0
Worsening in medical condition	6	13.3	5	15.6	5	15.2	4	16.7
Worsening in mental health condition	6	13.3	7	21.9	6	18.2	2	8.3
Worsening in substance abuse condition	6	13.3	9	28.1	2	6.1	4	16.7

Plans for living arrangement following exit where Veteran decided to leave

	Leased-Up Exiters		Nonleased Exiters	
	N	%	N	%
Plan	43	84.3	26	72.2
No plan	8	15.7	10	27.8
Total	51	100.0	36	100.0

Contributing factors to exit for those with plans for living arrangement following exit where Veteran decided to leave

	Leased-Up Exiters Plan		Leased-Up Exiters No Plan		Nonleased Exiters Plan		Nonleased Exiters No Plan	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	Apartment that was found did not pass inspection	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	3.8	1
Conflict with HUD-VASH case manager or other program staff	5	11.6	0	0.0	1	3.8	2	20.0
Conflict with landlord	4	9.3	2	25.0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Conflict with neighbors	5	11.6	0	0.0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Couldn't find an available apartment to rent with voucher	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	19.2	3	30.0

Exhibit I.33 Reasons for exits, study respondents

Did not have money to pay for security deposit or furniture	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	15.4	3	30.0
Difficulty paying the rent	4	9.3	3	37.5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Disagreement with program rules	1	2.3	0	0.0	2	7.7	2	20.0
Dissatisfaction with apartment	6	14.0	3	37.5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Dissatisfaction with available apartments	NA	NA	NA	NA	10	38.5	5	50.0
Dissatisfaction with neighborhood	6	14.0	2	25.0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Evicted from apartment	0	0.0	1	12.5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Improvement in health condition	5	11.6	0	0.0	1	3.8	0	0.0
Improvement in mental health condition	4	9.3	0	0.0	1	3.8	0	0.0
Improvement in substance abuse condition	4	9.3	0	0.0	1	3.8	0	0.0
Increase in income	21	48.8	1	12.5	3	11.5	1	10.0
Legal trouble such as arrest, jail, warrant, probation, lawsuit or trial	1	2.3	1	12.5	0	0.0	2	2.3
Offer from family or friend to move into their housing	9	20.9	1	12.5	12	46.2	1	10.0
Voucher revoked by HA	1	2.3	1	12.5	0	0.0	2	20.0
Worsening in medical condition	5	11.6	2	25.0	1	3.8	4	40.0
Worsening in mental health condition	5	11.6	3	37.5	2	7.7	4	40.0
Worsening in substance abuse condition	6	14.0	2	25.0	0	0.0	2	20.0

Source: Veteran Survey

*p≤0.10, **p≤0.05, ***p≤0.01

Exhibit I.34 Latent class analysis of leased-up exiters, HUD-VASH participants

	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3		Class 4		Class 5	
	N=666, 20.9%		N=536, 16.4%		N=507, 16.6%		N=833, 32.2%		N=417, 13.9%	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Study site										
Houston	316	47.5	0	0.0	199	39.3	352	42.3	122	29.3
Los Angeles	268	40.3	172	32	147	29.0	429	51.5	173	41.5
Palo Alto	45	6.7	364	68	151	29.8	0	0.0	88	21.1
Philadelphia	37	5.5	0	0.0	10	1.9	52	6.2	34	8.2
Gender										
Female	223	33.5	24	4.5	66	13.0	8	1.0	5	1.2
Male	443	66.5	512	95.5	441	87.0	825	99.0	412	98.9
Age										
<35	230	34.6	30	5.6	77	15.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
35-44	194	29.1	41	7.6	100	19.8	22	2.7	1	0.2
45-54	150	22.5	205	38.3	200	39.5	302	36.2	146	35.1
55-64	90	13.5	196	36.5	115	22.7	418	50.2	239	57.3
≥65	2	0.3	64	11.9	15	3.0	92	11.0	31	7.4
Race										
Black	478	71.7	169	31.6	234	46.2	592	71.1	224	53.6
White	161	24.1	322	60.0	233	45.9	197	23.7	181	43.3
Other	28	4.2	46	8.5	40	7.9	44	5.3	13	3.1
Enrollment priority group										
≥50% service-connected disability	314	47.2	102	19.1	251	49.5	78	9.4	51	12.3
<50% service-connected disability	145	21.8	84	15.6	107	21.2	133	16.0	58	14.0
No service-connected disability	168	25.3	321	59.8	134	26.4	558	67.0	286	68.5
Other	38	5.7	29	5.5	15	2.9	63	7.6	22	5.2
Medical and mental/behavioral health conditions and service use										
Any medical condition	37	5.5	75	14	247	48.8	130	15.6	343	82.2
Any mental health condition	34	5.1	41	7.7	415	81.9	53	6.4	316	75.7
Any substance use condition	23	3.4	53	9.8	401	79.1	142	17.1	354	84.8
Any inpatient stay pre-exit	13	2.0	31	5.8	45	8.9	75	9.0	103	24.8
VA case managers' reason for exit										
Accomplished goals	282	42.4	349	65.1	237	46.7	314	37.7	80	19.1
Cannot be located, too ill, incarcerated, or deceased	28	4.2	62	11.6	47	9.2	197	23.6	166	39.8
No longer financially eligible	69	10.3	6	1.2	58	11.5	11	1.3	1	0.3
Non-compliant with VA case management or evicted	87	13.1	27	5.1	41	8.1	111	13.3	86	20.6
Transferred to another HUD-VASH program or found other housing	91	13.6	31	5.8	55	10.8	77	9.3	30	7.3
Unhappy with housing or no longer interested in participating	52	7.8	24	4.4	37	7.3	47	5.6	26	6.3
Other	58	8.7	38	7	77	9.2	28	6.6	32	6.4

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.35 Latent class analysis of nonleased exiters, HUD-VASH participants

	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3	
	N=273, 25.2%		N=451, 44.9%		N=313, 29.9%	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Study site						
Houston	54	19.9	66	14.7	46	14.7
Los Angeles	176	64.5	298	66.1	180	57.5
Palo Alto	35	13.0	73	16.1	73	23.3
Philadelphia	7	2.6	16	3.5	14	4.5
Gender						
Female	79	28.8	7	1.5	11	3.4
Male	194	71.2	444	98.5	303	96.7
Age group						
<35	95	34.9	10	2.3	49	15.5
35-44	89	32.6	16	3.5	33	10.6
45-54	52	19.2	150	33.3	102	32.5
55-64	37	13.4	200	44.3	113	36.0
≥65	0	0.0	75	16.6	17	5.5
Race						
Black	130	47.6	230	51.0	116	37.1
White	105	38.4	206	45.7	171	54.7
Other	38	14.1	15	3.3	26	8.2
Enrollment priority group						
≥50% service-connected disability	124	45.3	53	11.8	104	33.2
<50% service-connected disability	78	28.6	68	15.0	50	16.1
No service-connected disability	64	23.4	294	65.2	148	47.4
Other	7	2.7	36	8.0	11	3.4
Medical and mental/behavioral health conditions and service use						
Any medical condition	18	6.5	62	13.8	203	64.8
Any mental health condition	26	9.5	17	3.8	271	86.6
Any substance use condition	11	4.0	38	8.4	270	86.2
Any inpatient stay pre-exit	27	6.0	75	24.0	15	5.4
VA case managers' reason for exit						
Accomplished goals	10	3.5	9	1.9	4	1.2
Cannot be located, too ill, incarcerated, or deceased	38	14.1	124	27.6	99	31.6
No longer financially eligible	17	6.1	18	4.0	8	2.6
Non-compliant with VA case management or evicted	37	13.6	55	12.1	41	13.2
Transferred to another HUD-VASH program or found other housing	61	22.5	71	15.7	49	15.6
Unhappy with housing or no longer interested in participating	56	20.6	93	20.7	57	18.1
Other	54	19.7	81	17.9	55	17.7

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, VA Medical Record

Exhibit I.36 Veterans' status post-exit

VA case manager assisted in finding new place to stay following exit, study respondents ^o				
	Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	14	17.7%	6	10.7%
No	65	82.3	50	89.3
Total	79	100	56	100
Plan to continue utilizing VA services, study respondents ^o				
	Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	75	94.9	55	96.5
No	4	5.1	2	3.5
Total	79	100	57	100
Ongoing contact with VA case manager, study respondents ^o				
	Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	13	16.5	10	18.2
No	66	83.5	45	81.8
Total	79	100	55	100
Frequency of VA case management following exit, HUD-VASH participants ^o				
	Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	M	SD	M	SD
30 days post-exit***	0.67	1.40	0.46	1.01
31-60 days post-exit**	0.15	1.06	0.08	0.69
61-90 days post-exit*	0.13	0.83	0.07	0.79
Returns to VA homeless programs, HUD-VASH participants [●]				
	Leased-Up Exitters		Nonleased Exitters	
	N	%	N	%
Any	228	7.3	154	10.2
Within 30 days	41	1.3	21	1.4
Within 60 days	74	2.4	38	2.5
Within 90 days	91	2.9	52	3.5
Within 180 days	127	4.1	82	5.4
Within 360 days	183	5.9	120	8.0

Sources: ● VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, ○ VA Medical Record, *p≤0.10,

p≤0.05, *p≤0.01

^oVeteran Survey

Exhibit I.37 Cox proportional hazards survival analysis for time to return to homelessness within 360 days, HUD-VASH participants^a (N=303)

	Estimate	Standard Error	Hazard Ratio	p
Houston	-0.261	0.144	0.770	0.070
Palo Alto	-0.314	0.160	0.731	0.050
Philadelphia	0.060	0.246	1.062	0.807
Nonleased exiters	0.371	0.121	1.449	0.002
Age	-0.007	0.006	0.993	0.183
Male	0.563	0.258	1.757	0.029
White	-0.117	0.126	0.890	0.353
Other race	-0.069	0.245	0.934	0.779
Service-connected disability	-0.339	0.122	0.713	0.006
Drug abuse	0.859	0.118	2.360	0.000

^a Reference categories: Study site—Los Angeles; Study group—Leased-up exiters; Gender—Female; Race—Black; Service-connected disability—No service-connected disability; Drug abuse—No diagnosis.

Sources: VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System, VA Medical Record

Bold font indicates $p \leq 0.05$

APPENDIX J: REFERENCES

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