

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS Veterans Health Administration Washington, DC 20420

IL 10-2013-003

Reply to: 10P3D

March 13, 2013

UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER

VHA SUPPORT AT STAND DOWNS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

- **1.** <u>Purpose.</u> This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Information Letter (IL) provides information on what support VHA facilities may provide at Stand Downs for homeless Veterans.
- 2. <u>Background.</u> Stand Downs are 1-3 day events providing health screenings, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other necessary services such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment. Stand Downs are collaborative events coordinated between local VAs, other government agencies, and community agencies, which serve homeless Veterans. In addition to this coordination role, staff from local VA facilities typically provide eligible Veterans with health screening, triage and other health-care services, mental health assessments and referrals, and increasingly screening and referrals for housing placements. VA is authorized to participate in these events to the extent VA is authorized to furnish medical care, conduct outreach and promote employment and other opportunities for Veterans.
- a. Historically, VHA has been able to provide limited financial support to local VA medical facilities involved in community Stand Down events. Such support is currently capped at \$3,000 per day/event.
- b. The VHA Office of Finance provided guidance for use of appropriated funds in the VHA Office of Finance Fiscal Alert, issued November 30, 2012. *NOTE:* For limitations on the use of appropriated funds see Attachment A.
- **3. Authorized Support.** VHA may provide the following support at stand downs:
- a. Assessment, referral, and other outpatient care services for eligible Veterans (e.g., health screenings, Mental Health assessments, podiatry services). Staff from local VA facilities may provide eligible Veterans with, for example, health screening, triage and other health-care services, mental health assessments and referrals, and screening and referrals for housing placements.

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- b. Counseling and referrals regarding Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) benefits. VHA must rely on VBA Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators (HVOCs) to provide counseling and referrals regarding VBA benefits to Veterans at a Stand Down.
- c. Informational Materials (e.g., flyers, printing, banners, and small give-away items with VA contact information). VA may use a variety of outreach and informational materials to let homeless Veterans know about VA services available at Stand Downs and about VA benefits generally. These materials may include small give-away items worth less than \$10, such as key chains, hygiene kits, cups, glasses, or clocks, provided VA contact information has been printed on the items such that they serve an outreach purpose. *NOTE:* Refer to the following link for VA policy on such items (see discussion of mementos): http://www.va.gov/finance/docs/VA-FinancialPolicyVolumeIIChapter04.pdf
- d. Educational Materials and Supplies (e.g., pamphlets, booklets, poster boards, easels). VA may use educational materials and supplies to educate homeless Veterans.
- e. Equipment Rentals (e.g., portable toilets and showers, lighting, storage facilities, audiovisual, chairs, tables, dumpsters, refrigeration units). VA may rent equipment to the extent that the equipment is necessary for VA to provide authorized support at a Stand Down. Equipment such as toilets, showers, and lighting may be necessary to maintain public health and safety at the Stand Down event.
- f. Consumable medical and hygiene supplies (e.g., bandages, gowns, thermometer covers, wipes, gloves, hand sanitizers). VA is authorized to use these materials in support of medical screening and to promote and maintain proper hygiene in providing authorized support at a Stand Down.
- g. Cleaning and Sanitation Supplies (e.g., trash bags, paper towels, soap, and bleach). VA may use cleaning and sanitation supplies in support of authorized Stand Down activities.
- h. Support Services (e.g., janitorial, waste disposal, security). VA may provide these services at Stand Downs if needed for VA to provide authorized support at a Stand Down.
- **4. Unauthorized.** VA may not provide the following in conjunction with Stand Downs:
- a. Transportation (e.g., bus tokens, rail passes, taxi fare). VA cannot provide bus tokens, rail passes, taxi fare, etc. for use in transporting Veterans to and from a Stand Down, unless authorized under the beneficiary travel regulations (38 C.F.R. Part 70). If the Stand Down is held at a VA medical facility, outpatient clinic, or community-based outpatient clinic, Beneficiary Travel regulations may permit VA to pay those eligible for their travel to and from the Stand Down. Payment for a common carrier cannot exceed the amount allowed for a privately owned vehicle unless travel by such vehicle is not reasonably accessible or travel by common carrier is medically necessary (see title 38 CFR Part 70 and VHA Handbook 1601B.05 for rules governing beneficiary travel).

- b. Clothing (e.g., socks, underwear, pants, shirts). VA is not authorized to use appropriated funds to purchase clothing to provide to Veterans at a Stand Down.
 - c. Stand Down-related Fees (e.g., membership dues, licenses, site permits).
- d. Food and beverages. VA is generally not authorized to use appropriated funds to purchase food for distribution to Veterans participating in Stand Downs. However, delegation of authority for the purchase of food and beverages through unrestricted general post funds has been granted to medical facility directors through the Under Secretary for Health memo dated April 5, 2012. *NOTE:* For more information see Attachment B.
- e. Gift Cards (e.g., groceries, meal cards, Target, Wal-Mart). VA is not authorized to provide gift cards for distribution to Veterans.
- f. Household Goods (e.g., apartment start-up kits, furniture, cookware). VA is not authorized to provide household goods for Veterans.
- g. Personal Equipment (e.g., prepaid cell phones or phone cards, heaters, totes, backpacks). VA is not authorized to provide personal equipment for Veterans, unless it could be considered "outreach material" as discussed in subparagraph 3c.
- h. Personal Services (e.g., haircuts, massage therapy, payment for performers or entertainment). VA is not authorized to provide Personal Services outside of the health care services discussed above for Veterans at Stand Downs.
- i. Subsidies or Assistance (e.g., rental deposits, utilities, documentation fees, laundry vouchers). VA is not authorized to pay Veterans' rental deposits, utilities, documentation fees, laundry expenses, etc.
- **5.** <u>Contact.</u> Inquiries may be directed to Mr. Robert Hallett, National Director, Health Care for Homeless Veterans at 781-687-3781.

Robert A. Petzel, M.D. Under Secretary for Health

DISTRIBUTION: E-mailed to the VHA Publications Distribution List 3/18/2013

ATTACHMENT A

VACO FISCAL ALERT-USE OF APPROPRIATED FUNDS



ATTACHMENT B

STAND DOWN GENERAL POST FUNDS

