

Addendum # 2

Dallas Housing Authority

Section 8 Programs

Set Aside for the

HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Program

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HUD - Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Program

### Introduction

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has long encouraged the use of Section 8 housing assistance as a tool to enable individuals and Families to become self-sufficient. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a strong commitment to providing quality care services to homeless veterans who have psychiatric or medical disabilities. In 1991, HUD and the VA entered into a cooperative venture in which HUD would offer "set-aside" Vouchers to the VA that would provide intensive case management services to homeless veterans who have psychiatric disabilities. This venture is known as the HUD/VASH Program. The Dallas Housing Authority (DHA) has received twenty-seven (27) one-bedroom housing vouchers for this program.

The strength of the VASH case management program is a formalized consortium of VA homeless programs called the VA Comprehensive Homeless Center (CHC). These programs have formally agreed to specify their commitment to working together to address the problems of homeless veterans in the Dallas Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) catchments area of operation.

This addendum to the Administrative Plan for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program describes the VASH program. The administration of the VASH Rental Vouchers will follow the Administrative Plan. The primary difference will be that twenty-seven (27) vouchers are specifically available to homeless veterans.

The initial goals of the VASH program are to help fifty percent (50%) of the individuals participating in the program to attain employment or job training. All of the individuals will successfully complete a residential program and will be involved in a case management treatment plan. In addition, seventy-five (75%) of the individuals will be capable of paying thirty percent (30%) of their rent. The ultimate goal is to assist participants to function with little or no assistance.

### Section I. Needs and Objectives

One of the primary causes of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. In addition, homeless individuals also have a high incidence of psychiatric and substance abuse disorders. These psychiatric impairments often result in an individual not having the skills needed to retain and maintain housing on a permanent basis. The VASH program addresses both of these issues.

The VASH program will subsidize homeless veterans to the point where they can afford housing without Section 8 assistance, but this is not a requirement. If a veteran is considered stable, but still needs the Section 8 assistance, the housing subsidy will continue. An individual will lose their assistance if he/she violates DHA policies regarding participation in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

### A. General Characteristics of Homeless Veterans

On any given night in Dallas, there are an estimated 2,000 homeless individuals residing in night shelters, transitional living units, doubled up with relatives or friends, or "living" in cars and abandoned buildings. Studies show that thirty to fifty percent of homeless men are veterans and are also eligible for VA services. The majority of these men are in their 40's and are Vietnam Era veterans. Sixty percent of these veterans have alcohol problems and another fourteen percent (14%) have substance abuse (drug) problems. Of these veterans, forty-two percent (42%) are Caucasian, forty-three percent (43%) are African-American, and the remainder are Hispanic or Native American.

A common characteristic of all the homeless veterans is the length of time spent without a fixed nighttime residence. The majority has been homeless for six to twelve months with brief stays in night shelters or transitional housing programs.

The reasons most often cited for the causes of homelessness include the following:

1. Chemical abuse (including alcohol);
2. Mental/emotional problems;
3. Unemployment;
4. Lack of financial resources;
5. No Family support (due to violence, dysfunction, etc.);
6. Physical/health problems;
7. Divorce/separation; and
8. Institutionalization in a prison or hospital.

### B. Needs

The most recognized needs of homeless veterans include:

1. Employment training;
2. Assistance with job search;
3. Legal assistance;
4. Affordable permanent housing;
5. Financial assistance in obtaining documentation;
6. Psychological services;

7. Health care for acute illness and routine preventative care; and
8. Substance abuse treatment.

### C. Objectives

The overall objective of the VASH Program is to provide services to homeless veterans that will give them the opportunity and skills to become self-sufficient and end the cycle of homelessness. The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Vouchers will provide the housing component that will allow these individuals to participate in an intensive case management process intended to assist in stabilizing their lives. The VASH case management program will provide these services for a minimum of one year and up to five years.

## Section II. Eligibility and Applications

Veterans eligible for the VASH Program:

- A. Must have been homeless, in a shelter or on the street, a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to identification by a VA outreach clinician.
- B. Must have a psychiatric or substance abuse disorder; or
- C. Must have successfully completed a residential treatment program, i.e., Homeless Domiciliary program, Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill (HCMI) program.

If an individual has a past history of criminal activity, or substance abuse is preventing stabilization, the individual must show a willingness to be rehabilitated. Some evidence of motivation to change must be present. Individuals who have a felony conviction within the past five years will be ineligible for the program.

Potential clients will be screened and referred by the VA Comprehensive Homeless Center programs to VA case managers assigned to the VASH Program. These case managers will conduct an in-depth assessment of the potential client and present that case to the CHC screening committee. Members of the CHC Clinical Council will decide if the client is a candidate to receive Section 8 assistance, and, if approved, will be assigned to a VASH case manager. The Clinical Council of the CHC is comprised of program directors of the various VA homeless programs. The Clinical Council meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month and will review applications for admission to the VASH Program and provide or suggest resources to meet the diverse needs of program clients. Any Clinical Council member may present potential candidates for the program. Only individuals approved by CHC Clinical Council members are program eligible. All referrals must qualify and be eligible for Section 8 assistance as per DHA Administrative Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

VASH case managers will refer veteran clients to the Dallas Housing Authority's Applications and Assignments division to apply for a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher. At the time of

referral, the VASH case manager will ensure that the veteran has all documentation necessary to complete the application.

Section III. Case Management and Program Participation Contract

Once a candidate is accepted for the program, the individual will be assigned to one of two VASH clinicians providing case management services. The VASH case manager will be responsible for developing a contract and written treatment plan which outlines the client's rehabilitation and responsibilities. The VASH case manager will be responsible for implementation of the treatment plan. The case manager provides ongoing monitoring in conjunction with programs of the CHC.

Case managers will advocate for their clients and present an accurate assessment of needs. Case managers, on a regular basis, will present problems and needs of clients to the Director of the Dallas VA Comprehensive Homeless Center. Clinical Council members have the authority to commit their program's resources in order to respond to problems or meet needs that are presented.

Section IV. Applicability of DHA Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative

DHA Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan's operational directives regarding DHA Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program are applicable to VASH participants with the exception of twenty-seven (27) vouchers that are set aside specifically for VASH referrals. Other individuals on DHA Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program will not use these Vouchers unless VASH does not make a sufficient number of eligible referrals to fully utilize the vouchers.

Section V. Program Evaluation and Monitoring

The VA Clinical Council of the CHC is responsible for directing and monitoring the local HUD-VASH Program. This includes local program review and assessment, effectiveness of resource development, community education, and related issues. Their case managers will report clients' progress.

Addendum # 3

Dallas Housing Authority

Section 8 Program

Family Unification Program