

GRAND RAPIDS AREA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM RESPONSE

Introduction and Background

In 2010, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) introduced the first comprehensive federal strategy to prevent and end homelessness. This plan, called Opening Doors, outlined a number of goals related to ending homelessness in the U.S. – the first of these committed to ending Veteran homelessness by 2016.

In 2015, the USICH, along with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), adopted a vision of what it means to end homelessness and shared specific criteria and benchmarks for ending Veteran homelessness in order to help guide communities as they take action to achieve the goal, with a focus on long-term, lasting solutions.

In line with the federal goals outlined in Opening Doors, the Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness has committed to a goal of effectively ending Veteran homelessness in the CoC by 2017. To that end, the Grand Rapids Area Coalition has focused recent efforts on a housing first approach to ensuring all Veterans have access to safe and affordable housing.

The Grand Rapids Area Coalition has determined that ending Veteran homelessness in our CoC means the following:

Where Veteran homelessness does occur, it is rare, brief, and non-recurring. More specifically, every identified homeless Veteran who is unsheltered is immediately offered access to low-barrier shelter, and every Veteran who is unsheltered or in emergency shelter or Transitional Housing in Kent County is immediately offered access to low-barrier permanent housing placement and stabilization assistance. Veterans who accept assistance will be re-housed within an average of 90 days. To achieve this, the CoC is committed to the principles of Housing First, which means our system is primarily focused on quick placement into permanent housing, respecting Veteran choice, and targeting our resources to those with greatest needs.

Using the federal criteria and benchmarks as our guide, this document includes policies and procedures for a coordinated and standardized response to Veteran homelessness across our entire community.

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Responsibility for Oversight

In July of 2016, The Grand Rapids Area Coalition Steering Committee voted and approved, Community Rebuilders a Supportive Services for Veteran Families funded organization as the lead grantee/organization charged with managing the Ending Veteran Homelessness Community Planning and Coordination. This includes managing and maintaining the community's By Name List (described below). In addition Community Rebuilders, in partnership with the Grand Rapids Area Coalition, is to ensure that the policies and procedures outlined in this document are implemented appropriately at the system, provider, and client level, and regularly monitoring progress towards ending Veteran Homelessness goal and continued maintenance of the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness designation.

Common Terms

Veteran

A Veteran is someone who, regardless of discharge status, has served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.

Permanent Housing Assistance (i.e., “permanent housing intervention”)

A subsidy or other form of rental assistance, with appropriate services and supports. Interventions can include SSVF, HUD-VASH, and CoC Program-funded rapid re-housing (where rental assistance is included), CoC Program-funded permanent supportive housing, Housing Choice voucher (HCV), or other form of permanent housing subsidy or rental assistance.

By Name List

The By Name List is the primary means used to identify and track all currently homeless Veterans (unsheltered, in emergency shelter or transitional housing) in Kent County and to report on current housing plans and movement towards permanent housing. HMIS is the primary data source for the by name list and includes multiple data fields necessary to identify and track assistance and outcomes for individual Veterans.

GRAND RAPIDS AREA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Identifying Homeless Veterans

1. **Policy** – All literally homeless Veterans in Kent County geographic area are immediately identified.

Procedure – Supportive Services for Veteran Families Outreach Teams engage in street outreach on a weekly basis, as appropriate, for purposes of identifying all unsheltered homeless Veterans.

- CR SSVF staff coordinate with the CoC, Housing Assessment Program, VA outreach, MTM, and VOA SSVF outreach to ensure comprehensive coverage and efficient provision of services.
- Adding Veterans to the by name list (see EVH process below).

Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmark to Ending Veteran Homelessness Process

Enhancing the current process by allowing the community to refer homeless Veterans for services through an improved coordinated outreach and engagement process to ensure all Veterans who are experiencing literal homelessness in the community are entered onto the Veteran By- Name List

This workflow is not intended to replace a referral to coordinated entry and should not be used as an alternative to referring a Veteran to The Salvation Army's Housing Assessment Program (HAP).

Phase 1:

1. If a homeless Veterans enters any HMIS participating provider the provider will complete an immediate HMIS referral service transaction to the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness provider page. If the Veteran is not connected to a housing resource please add a need with a note indicating outreach instructions. A signed ROI must accompany the referral in the file attachments as an upload.
 - a. Ex. Homeless Veteran enters an emergency shelter project, the data entry staff will do an HMIS referral service transaction to the EVH provider page.

GRAND RAPIDS AREA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

2. If a Veteran calls HAP for an assessment or completes the CHC assessment online but doesn't have their DD214 available, HAP will refer the Veteran to the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness page via HMIS referral service transaction
3. If a Veteran is referred to HAP via the VA and is accompanied with their DD214, HAP will add the Veteran to the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness by-name-list through an entry- exit utilizing the HAP Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness Workflow
4. If a Veteran completes the CHC assessment and meets with a member of the Veteran outreach team, staff will notify the Director of Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance at Community Rebuilders (csheroski@communityrebuilders.org).
5. Community Rebuilders will be alerted to all incoming referrals to the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness page and produce an Outreach list
6. The Outreach team will go out weekly or more frequently as needed to engage and confirm Veteran status

Phase 2:

1. Literally homeless Veterans are added to the by-name list through a basic program entry onto the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness provider page.
2. Veterans are then referred to the lead agency, Community Rebuilders, for further assessment.
3. Community Rebuilders SSVF program will confirm Homeless status and acquire proof of veteran status.
4. Clients whom do not meet the definition of literally homeless and/or U.S. Military veteran will be referred outward for assistance, where possible, and exited from the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness entry appropriately.
5. Clients whom meet all program requirements for assistance and completed a housing plan, will be given a service transaction (left without an end date) within the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness entry to denote they are active and connected clients.
6. Once a veteran has a program outcome (Housing, inactive for 90 days, 3 consecutive failed contacts, deceased, moved out of state, ultimately not a veteran), the service transaction is end dated and they are exited from the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending

GRAND RAPIDS AREA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Veteran Homelessness entry.

7. Once Veteran status has been confirmed CR staff will add the Veteran to the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness by-name-list
8. The current workflow for managing the Veteran by-name-list is based on the benchmarks and standards set by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH).

Exit Destination;

Data Not Collected = Inactive Client

No Exit Interview Completed = Not a Veteran

Deceased = Deceased

Other = Moved out of State/County

Rental by Client with no ongoing subsidy =

Permanent Housing was obtained/maintained

Visibility and Management

All HMIS participating agencies and non HMIS participating agencies can participate in Phase 1

Community Rebuilders will manage Phase 2

CoC System Administrator will have visibility of the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness By-Name List

Coordinated Entry staff will have visibility of the EVH By-Name List

All HMIS participating agencies will be responsible for updating Community Rebuilders when a Veteran has moved into housing

BNL Reporting

1. **Policy** – All literally homeless Veterans identified in Kent County are tracked on the EVH By Name List.

GRAND RAPIDS AREA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Procedure – The CoC HMIS System Administrator, Coordinated Entry staff and Community Rebuilders (SSVF lead agency) all have access to maintain and populate the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness by name list and reporting capabilities.

- Community Rebuilders pulls the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness BNL report utilizing data from HMIS, on a bi-weekly basis, updating the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness data and the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmark to Ending Veteran Homelessness data dashboard accordingly.
 - The report includes data on all literally homeless Veterans in the CoC
 - HMIS serves as the primary data source for the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness report.
 - The Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness BNL report is used to manage Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness

Procedure – Grand Rapids Area Coalition HMIS Providers working with homeless Veterans are responsible for adding Veterans served in HMIS by the corresponding project serving the Veteran.

The Veteran's Administration (a non HMIS provider) is responsible for faxing Veteran referrals to the Housing Assessment Program

The Veteran's Administration is responsible for communicating all HUD-VASH voucher recipient entry's and exits to Community Rebuilders, in order to update the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness BNL report adequately.

Providing Immediate Shelter to Unsheltered Homeless Veterans

2. **Policy** – The Grand Rapids Area Continuum of Care is responsible for providing shelter immediately to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it.

Procedure – SSVF grantees and, where applicable, local dedicated street outreach teams assist in moving unsheltered homeless Veterans into local emergency shelters and transitional housing units.

GRAND RAPIDS AREA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

- a. There is current program capacity through SSVF, VRS, and PDO programs to provide emergency shelter and or transitional housing to all unsheltered Veterans. In the case where shelter and transitional housing capacity are at full capacity, SSVF provider organizations may pay for a temporary stay in a local hotel/motel for the unsheltered homeless Veteran, where the Veteran is eligible and following SSVF requirements,
- b. If unsheltered Veterans decline an emergency shelter offer because of excessive barriers to entry (i.e., barriers that do not comply with the Grand Rapids Area Coalition Homeless Program Standards), SSVF or other program staff working with the Veteran will contact CoC staff to report the issue and CoC and SSVF/other staff will advocate on behalf of the unsheltered homeless Veteran
 - o If the issues with local shelter barriers to entry cannot be immediately resolved, SSVF grantees may pay for a temporary stay in a local hotel/motel for the unsheltered homeless Veteran, where the Veteran is eligible and following SSVF requirements

3. Policy – SSVF, VRS, and GPD homeless services providers assisting unsheltered homeless Veterans will document offers of shelter

Procedure – SSVF, VRS, and GPD providers and local dedicated street outreach teams or other providers assisting unsheltered homeless Veterans, document the offers of shelter they make to Veterans

- a. Documentation is made on the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks To Ending Veteran Homelessness BNL and includes identifying the date of the shelter offer, whether the Veteran accepted or declined, and reasons for a decline

Housing Focused System and Providers

4. Policy – The Grand Rapids Area Coalition is committed to immediately providing permanent housing (PH) to all homeless Veterans who desire it, regardless of perceived needs or issues

Procedure – SSVF, GPD, and VRS providers will contact homeless Veterans within 3 business days for program intake.

Referral to SSVF does not necessarily mean that a Veteran will be assisted with SSVF resources. SSVF grantees must determine if the Veteran is eligible and if the

GRAND RAPIDS AREA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Veteran desires to accept an offer of assistance.

- SSVF providers will only decline to provide RRH assistance to homeless Veterans if they are not eligible per SSVF program requirements or if the Veterans decline SSVF-RRH assistance
 - For Veterans who may require additional support than what RRH can provide the Coordinated Entry staff will match the Veteran to the most appropriate resource, following CoC Coordinated Entry policies and procedures.
 - SSVF program funding may be used as bridge housing in the interim until a connection to PSH is made.

Monitoring System and Provider Capacity to End Veteran Homelessness

- 5. Policy** – The CoC, Housing Assessment Program and Community Rebuilders through the Veteran Resource Chart monitor provider and system capacity to ensure the CoC maintains resources to move homeless Veterans into PH quickly

Procedure – SSVF, GPD, and VRS providers maintain program openings via the HAP resource chart on a regular basis.

- 6. Policy** – The Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmark to Ending Veteran Homelessness committee monitors progress on the federal benchmarks for Maintaining Veteran homelessness to ensure the sustainability of the CoC's system response and identify any problems or issue areas

Procedure – On a monthly basis at minimum, Community Rebuilders staff will monitor and report on the following data:

- a. Federal Benchmarks (per the federal specifications)
 - i. Number of Actively Homeless Veterans (not having declined PH)
 - ii. Number of Chronically Homeless Veterans
 - iii. Average length of time to house Veterans
 - iv. Number of Veterans exiting to PH vs. number of Veterans entering homelessness
 - v. Number of Veterans entering TH (having declined PH offers) vs. number of Veterans entering homelessness
 - vi. Number of homeless Veterans entering our system (per month)
 - vii. Number of homeless Veterans exiting to PH (per month)
 - viii. Returns to homelessness across all project types
 - ix. Number/rate of homeless Veterans served by non-VA funded programs
 - x. Veterans in need to connect status

GRAND RAPIDS AREA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

For Veterans in need to connect status System Case Conferencing will occur. Due to confidentiality procedures, only HMIS participating organizations and the Veterans Administration (who has signed a release of information) can participate in system case conferencing meetings.

System Case conferencing purpose:

System case conferencing is to ensure policy, processes and workflows are in place in order to ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring for Veterans (Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness status).

System case conferencing includes:

1. Increasing and building upon practices that house Veteran's faster (i.e. conducting housing focused outreach consistently).
2. Monitoring the by name list (BNL) and confirming regular updates and exits from homelessness are occurring.
3. Evaluating the availability of housing resources and any needs or gaps in service delivery.
4. Review of the equity dashboards.
5. Monitor and map system flow.
6. Review Veteran returns to homelessness- at least 95% of the Veterans housed in 2024 do not return to homelessness during the year. And of those who return to homelessness, ensure that at least 90% are rehoused or on a path to be rehoused by the end of 2024.
7. Review co-enrollment processes.
8. Review Veterans on the BNL in crisis/need to connect status (Participants in this discussion need to be on the QSOBAA or covered by VA routine use #30).

The Veteran BNL provides real time data about Veterans experiencing homelessness in the community. System Case Conferencing meetings are used to ensure all providers understand and are utilizing the BNL and

GRAND RAPIDS AREA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

entering all data points. The Veteran BNL is maintained by The Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness, and SSVF Lead Agency Community Rebuilders.

The BNL is utilized to ensure all Veterans are located and linked to the appropriate services.

Responsibility of the Maintaining USICH Federal Criteria and Benchmarks to Ending Veteran Homelessness Committee and Veteran Action Board ensures:

- Providers know how and when Veterans are added to the BNL
- Consents are in place when adding Veterans to BNL
- Providers understand the process used to update the BNL
- Data is updated in a timely manner
- Unsheltered Veterans have been identified and linked to emergency accommodations and are housed quickly
- Monitoring of inactivity protocol for BNL
- Minimum monthly data submissions are made by HMIS providers
- BNL inflow monitoring occurs
- Resource connections at inflow take place
- Review system equity dashboards, encourage provider use of equity dashboards
- Ensure co-enrollment processes are in place and reviewed every six months

APPROVED ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS DOCUMENTS

The following documents below have been approved for use by the Ending Veteran Homelessness Committee and Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness.

[MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT FORM](#)

[ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS WORKGROUP COMMITTEMENT](#)

Do you have what we need?

REQUIRED RESOURCES



Please complete and return the attached page. Indicate any resources that you can dedicate to this effort. A member from the committee will follow up and help you complete a resource chart that will be used for referral.

WORKING TOGETHER TO DO OUR PART!

- Community Rebuilders
- The Salvation Army Housing Assessment Program
- West Michigan Veteran Assistance Program
- Kent County Veteran Services
- Health Care for Homeless Veterans
- Volunteers of America
- Grand Rapids Coalition to End Homelessness
- Pine Rest

Achieving USICH Federal requires a community of resources and support. Add your organization to the effort by completing the attached form and returning to Anna Diaz.

adiaz@communityrebuilders.org

Veteran Resources

REQUIRED RESOURCES



PREVENTION ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS DIVERTED FROM SHELTER

- Prevention plan creation
- Diversion resources
- Prevention resources



LOW BARRIER SHELTER

- Shelter providers who agree to not turn away any Veteran
- Dedicated shelter beds so that zero veterans are left on the street



ASSERTIVE ENGAGEMENT

- No Veteran will be unattached to housing services - repeated outreach efforts



RAPID SCREENING

- HMIS entry and assessment



LINKAGE AND SUPPORTS TO SERVICES

- Transportation
- Health Care
- Employment Assistance
- Child Care Assistance
- Benefits Assistance
- Other: _____



RAPID REHOUSING

Housing First Assistance for Veterans

- Rapid Rehousing
- HUD/VASH
- SSVF
- CoC/PSH
- ESG RRH
- Section 8
- Housing Choice Vouchers
- Senior Housing
- Veteran's Own Resources
- Private Donation Rental Assistance
- Transitional Housing
- Housing Stability Plan for Every Veteran Served

Veteran Resources

REQUIRED RESOURCES



PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING - HOUSING FIRST FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- HUD/VASH
- CoC/PSH
- Section 8
- Housing Choice Vouchers
- Senior Housing
- Private Donation Rental Assistance
- Housing Stability Plan for Every Veteran Served

We are proud to be a partner in Kent County's Community Plan to End Veteran Homelessness. We have committed the resources checked on the attached form.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

TITLE: _____

AGENCY NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM TO:

ANNA DIAZ

By Email: adiaz@communityrebuilders.org

By Fax: (616) 458-8788 Attn: Anna Diaz

By U.S. Mail:

**Community Rebuilders, Anna Diaz
1120 Monroe NW Ste 220
Grand Rapids, MI 49503**

ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEE WORKGROUPS

In 2015, this community rallied and committed to ending Veteran homelessness. In 2017, we achieved that goal by housing over 600 homeless Kent County Veterans. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) *coordinates and catalyzes the Federal response to homelessness in partnership with senior leaders across 19 Federal agencies*. In 2017, the USICH declared Kent County as having effectively ended Veteran homelessness. This means that Veteran homelessness is rare, brief and nonrecurring.

It took critical partnerships and resources to reach that milestone. Now, the hard work begins. We must NEVER reach a point in our community where we have hundreds of homeless Veterans. Your commitment today will help ensure our continued efforts to house all Veterans and their families who are experiencing a housing crisis! Please sign up for a workgroup as part of the Ending Veteran Homelessness Committee. Each workgroup recommends a yearlong commitment and will meet at least monthly and report back to the Ending Veteran Homelessness Committee.

MAINTAINING USICH FEDERAL CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS WORKGROUP

Members will focus on the benchmarks and criteria for maintaining a system that ensures Veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring in Kent County. The workgroup will evaluate outcomes, outreach, and coordination efforts for Veterans within Kent County in accordance with HUD and VA regulations.

ENGAGEMENT & RESOURCE WORKGROUP

Members will focus on community engagement, awareness and education. The workgroup will formalize education and training materials and evaluate interagency partnerships to identify new opportunities to engage community members, landlords, and businesses in our efforts to maintain an end to Veteran homelessness.

I WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE QUARTERLY ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEE MEETING

We are proud to be a partner in Kent County's Community Plan to maintain an end to Veteran homelessness. We have committed to the workgroup checked above.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____ Title: _____

Agency Name: _____

Email: _____ Contact Number: _____

Please return form via email to Maranda VanZegeren: mvanzegeren@communitybuilders.org or fax to (616) 458-8788