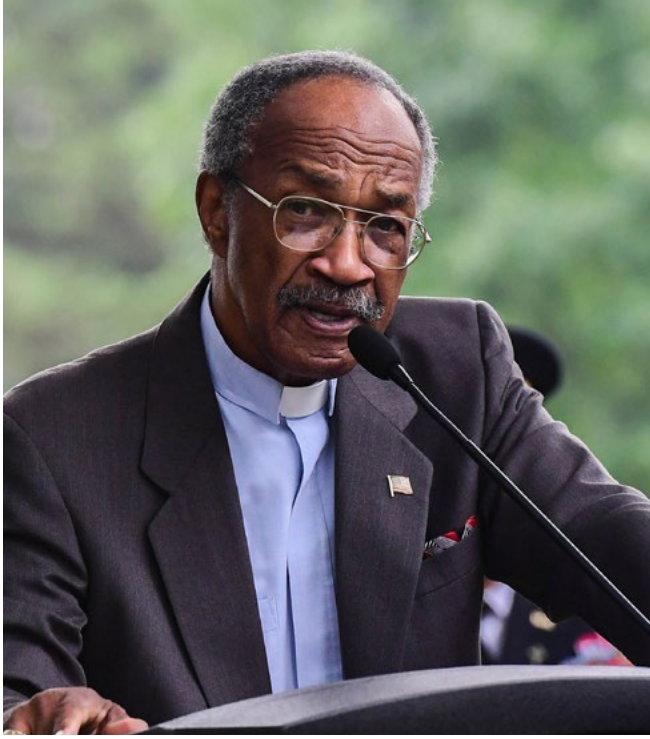






Faith, Community, and Home

Resource Toolkit for Faith Leaders to Support Homeless Veterans

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

TABLE OF **CONTENTS**

Introduction and Purpose 03

Section 1: Understanding Veteran Homelessness 05

Section 2: Understanding Military Culture 08

Section 3: Building Trust and the Importance of Trauma-Informed Engagement 10

Section 4: Supporting Veterans Already Connected to Your Faith Community 13

Section 5: Talking About Homelessness 15

Section 6: Mobilizing Members and Volunteers to Support Homeless Veterans 17

Section 7: Connecting Veterans to Resources and Support 21

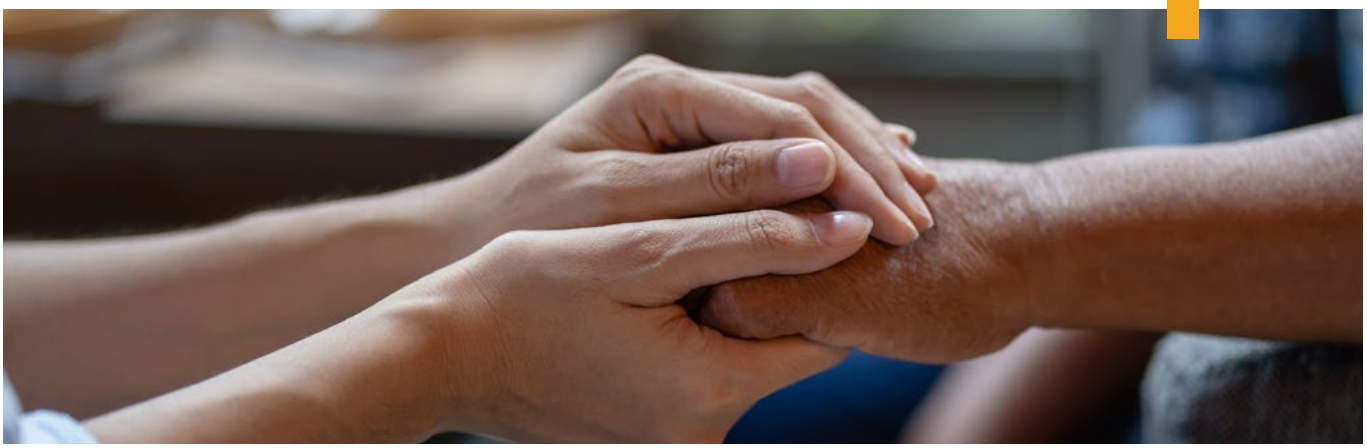
Conclusion 23

Appendix 24

Appendix A: Communications Guide for Faith Leaders 24
Appendix B: Customizable Flyer for Supplies Drive 27
Appendix C: Local Veteran Resource Directory Template 28

References 30

Introduction and Purpose



Faith communities of all traditions have long served as welcoming places where individuals find comfort, connection, and support during life's most challenging moments. Rooted in values of service, compassion, and caring for others, faith communities are some of the most trusted institutions in many neighborhoods and are often where people turn during times of hardship, uncertainty, or crisis—sometimes even before seeking help from formal support systems such as government agencies, community organizations, or health care providers.

Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness may approach and confide in faith leaders before seeking help from a service provider. Because of these relationships, faith leaders are uniquely positioned to foster a sense of belonging, build trusted relationships, recognize when a Veteran may need additional support, and help connect Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness with housing, health care, and other resources.

Faith leaders can also play an important role in supporting homeless Veterans by raising awareness about and addressing stigmas around homelessness, mobilizing volunteers, and partnering with organizations that directly serve Veterans.

This toolkit is designed to help faith leaders:

- Better understand Veteran homelessness
- Better understand military culture and the Veteran experience
- Recognize signs that a Veteran may need support
- Engage Veterans in respectful and trauma-informed ways
- Create welcoming environments for Veterans and military families
- Mobilize volunteers and resources to support Veterans experiencing homelessness
- Build partnerships with Veteran-serving organizations
- Connect Veterans with community and VA resources

This toolkit is designed for use by faith leaders of all traditions and should be adapted to local contexts and community needs. It is not intended to replace professional training, clinical care, case management, or other homelessness services.

This toolkit was developed as part of a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Homeless Programs Office and the VA Center for Faith.

WHY THIS MATTERS

According to the 2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, an estimated 32,495 Veterans experienced homelessness on a single night in January 2025.[1] Although this represents a 56% decrease in Veteran homelessness since 2010,[2] it is clear that Veteran homelessness remains a significant challenge across the country and that work remains to ensure every Veteran has a safe, stable place to call home.

Homelessness is rarely caused by a single event. Rather, it often reflects a combination of individual and systemic factors, including lack of affordable housing, economic pressures, mental health conditions, and difficulty navigating major life transitions.[3,4]

While stable housing is a critical component of addressing homelessness, connection and community matter as well.[5] Veterans experiencing homelessness often face isolation, loss of support networks, and difficulty navigating complex systems and services.

By building trusted relationships, reducing stigma, and helping Veterans connect with available resources, faith leaders can play an important role in supporting Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Faith leaders and communities are not expected to replace housing providers, health care systems, or Veteran-serving organizations. Instead, they can complement those existing resources by strengthening connections, reducing stigma, mobilizing volunteers, and helping Veterans access available resources.

This toolkit is organized around six key roles faith leaders and communities can play in supporting Veterans experiencing homelessness:

- **Understand:** Develop a deeper understanding of Veteran homelessness and the factors that can contribute to housing instability.
- **Build Trust:** Foster respectful, supportive relationships with Veterans in your community.
- **Support:** Recognize signs that a Veteran may need assistance and initiate trust-building conversations.
- **Communicate and Educate:** Increase awareness of Veteran homelessness and reduce stigma by talking about homelessness thoughtfully, respectfully, and accurately.
- **Mobilize:** Engage volunteers and community members in supporting homeless Veterans throughout your community.
- **Connect:** Help Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness access housing, health care, benefits, and other resources.

Each section in this toolkit can be read independently or used as a quick-reference guide depending on your role and the needs of Veterans in your community.



Section 1: Understanding Veteran Homelessness

Veterans experiencing homelessness represent diverse demographics, backgrounds, and life experiences. Homelessness can affect anyone and is not limited to a particular group of Veterans.

Veteran homelessness can also look different than what people might expect and signs of homelessness may be visible or hidden. Some Veterans experience unsheltered homelessness and may be sleeping outdoors, in vehicles, or other places not intended for human habitation. Others may experience less visible forms of homelessness or housing instability such as staying with family members or friends temporarily, moving frequently between short-term living arrangements, or facing eviction. Understanding this can help faith leaders recognize when someone may need support.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO VETERAN HOMELESSNESS?

There is no single cause of Veteran homelessness. Rather, homelessness often develops because of multiple overlapping individual and systemic factors.[3,4] Common contributing factors include:

- **Housing Affordability:** Limited affordable housing, rising rents, and increased housing costs can make it difficult for individuals and families to maintain stable housing.
- **Economic Challenges:** Job loss, unemployment, debt, or unexpected financial emergencies can quickly lead to housing instability.
- **Physical and Mental Health Conditions:** Chronic health issues, service-related injuries, mental health conditions, and substance use disorders may affect employment, personal relationships, and housing stability.
- **Loss of Social Supports:** Social isolation, family conflict, divorce, and the loss of trusted relationships can increase vulnerability to homelessness.
- **Justice Involvement:** Some Veterans face barriers to employment and housing following involvement with the justice system, making it more difficult to secure or maintain housing.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Misconception	Reality
Homelessness is a choice.	Veteran homelessness is often the result of multiple overlapping individual and systemic factors such as housing costs, financial hardship, health challenges, loss of support networks, or major life transitions. Most people experiencing homelessness are navigating complex challenges rather than choosing to be homeless.
All Veterans experiencing homelessness have mental illnesses.	Mental health and homelessness are often interconnected, and while mental health conditions may be one factor that increases the risk of homelessness, Veteran homelessness has many contributing causes and affects individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances. The stress and trauma associated with homelessness can also worsen existing mental health challenges.
Employment prevents homelessness.	Many Veterans experiencing homelessness are employed or actively seeking work but still face challenges related to high housing costs, limited affordable housing, or financial hardship.
People experiencing homelessness simply need more motivation.	Many Veterans experiencing homelessness are actively working toward housing stability while facing significant barriers beyond their control.
Veterans can easily access help when they need it.	Navigating benefits, services, and housing programs can be difficult, especially during times of crisis.
If Veterans need help, they can just go to VA.	Many Veterans do receive support through VA programs, but navigating services can be complicated. Veterans in these situations can often benefit from encouragement, information, and trusted support along the way.

WHY SOME VETERANS MAY NOT SEEK HELP

Faith leaders may wonder why a Veteran experiencing or at risk of homelessness does not simply ask for help directly. Many Veterans face barriers that make seeking help difficult even when support is available.

Some Veterans may value their independence and feel they should handle challenges on their own. Others may worry about being judged, fear burdening others, or feel frustrated after previous attempts to access support. Common barriers to seeking help include:

- Pride and independence
- Military values emphasizing self-reliance
- Fear of being judged
- Concern about burdening others
- Previous negative experiences seeking help
- Difficulty navigating available services
- Lack of awareness about available resources
- Feelings of discouragement or hopelessness

Understanding these barriers can help faith leaders respond with patience and compassion.

TIPS FOR FAITH LEADERS:

- Avoid assuming that signs of housing instability or homelessness will be visible or obvious.
- Understand that homelessness is rarely caused by a single event and often develops over time because of overlapping individual and systemic factors.
- Recognize that asking for help can be difficult for some Veterans.
- Remember that Pastoral counseling can work in parallel with clinical treatment.
-

Reminder: A Veteran declining help today does not mean that they will decline help tomorrow. Trust is often built through consistent, supportive interactions over time.







Section 2: Understanding Military Culture

Military culture plays a significant role in shaping Veterans' values, communication styles, and identities. While every Veteran's experience is unique, military service often influences how Veterans ask for support and approach challenges, including housing instability.

Many Veterans develop strong values through military service, including:

- Service and discipline
- Duty and responsibility
- Teamwork and accountability
- Perseverance and resilience
- Leadership

These values often remain important to Veterans after military service ends and can influence how they approach challenges and help-seeking.



WHY UNDERSTANDING MILITARY CULTURE MATTERS

Military culture can shape how Veterans think about independence, strength, and asking for help. During military service, individuals are often expected to overcome challenges, remain mission-focused, and persevere through adversity. As a result, some Veterans may feel they should handle problems on their own or avoid talking about personal struggles. However, this does not mean Veterans are unwilling to accept support.

Understanding military culture can help faith leaders better understand the experiences of Veterans and military families and provide more effective support.

UNDERSTANDING SELF-RELIANCE AND HELP-SEEKING

The values developed through military service, such as responsibility, perseverance, and self-reliance, can influence how some Veterans respond when facing challenges. When experiencing housing instability or other hardships, a Veteran may:

- Hesitate to accept help
- Downplay personal struggles
- Avoid talking about financial, housing, or health concerns
- Prefer to solve problems independently
- Delay seeking support until problems become more serious

Recognizing these barriers can help faith leaders respond with understanding and patience. One helpful approach is to remind Veterans that seeking support is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength, responsibility, and a commitment to improving their situation.

TIPS FOR FAITH LEADERS:

- Avoid making assumptions about a Veteran's experiences or military service.
- Allow Veterans to decide how much they want to share about their military experience.
- Understand that self-reliance may make it more difficult for some Veterans to ask for help.
- Reinforce that asking for and accepting help is a sign of strength.
- Offer support without pressure, while respecting the Veteran's personal boundaries.



Reminder: Faith leaders are not expected to be experts on military service. Instead, the goal is to understand how military culture and experiences may influence the way Veterans view independence and self-reliance and help Veterans recognize that asking for help is consistent with the values of strength, resilience, and perseverance they carried throughout their military service.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: PSYCHARMOR

PsychArmor: The Basics of Military Culture

PsychArmor offers free online courses to help leaders better understand and support Veterans, service members, and their families. PsychArmor's *The Basics of Military Culture* training helps viewers understand the values and experiences unique to Veterans and service members and equips them with the knowledge to better support military-connected individuals.

Register with PsychArmor to complete the free training.

Section 3: Building Trust and the Importance of Trauma-Informed Engagement

Trust is often one of the most important factors that determine whether a Veteran feels comfortable asking for or accepting help. For Veterans who have experienced housing instability, trauma, disappointment, or negative experiences with institutions, trust can take time to develop.

Faith leaders do not need clinical training to provide meaningful support. Understanding a few trauma-informed principles can help facilitate supportive conversations and interactions that foster dignity, respect, and trust.

Do	Don't
• Listen more than speak • Respect a Veteran's privacy • Validate their lived experiences • Be honest about what you can and cannot do • Focus on building relationships rather than providing immediate results or solutions • Follow through on commitments	• Rush conversations • Assume you understand a Veteran's experiences • Judge decisions or circumstances • Make promises you cannot keep • Pressure Veterans to accept help

TRAUMA-INFORMED ENGAGEMENT

Trauma-informed engagement recognizes that many Veterans experiencing homelessness have faced significant stress, adversity, loss, and trauma. As a result, approaching these interactions with sensitivity can help create a welcoming and supportive environment where Veterans feel safe and empowered to make decisions about what they would like to share and what support they would like to receive.

Core principles of trauma-informed engagement as outlined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) are provided below.[6]

- **Safety:** People are more likely to engage when they feel physically and emotionally safe. Create welcoming spaces and respect Veterans' personal boundaries.
- **Trust:** Trust is built when people consistently do what they say they will do. Be honest about what support is available and about what you don't know. Follow through on commitments and avoid promises that you cannot keep.
- **Choice:** Experiencing homelessness often involves losing control over important aspects of daily life. When possible, offer choices rather than directing or instructing Veterans on what they should or shouldn't do.
- **Collaboration:** Support works best when it is done with someone rather than for someone. Ask Veterans what they need and work alongside them rather than making decisions for them.
- **Empowerment:** Focusing on Veterans' strengths rather than their challenges can help Veterans feel respected rather than defined by their current circumstances.

Scenario	Suggested Talking Points
A Veteran shares a difficult situation.	• "That sounds incredibly difficult." • "Thank you for sharing that with me." • "I appreciate your openness." • "How are you managing through all of that?"
A Veteran is hesitant to accept help.	• "I know it may feel like handling challenges on your own is a sign of strength, but accepting help is also a sign of strength and shows you're taking charge of the situation." • "Seeking help doesn't take away your independence. Resources can simply be another tool to help you move forward."
A Veteran declines an offer for help.	• "I respect your decision." • "If things change, please know we're here for you." • "You're always welcome to reach out."
You are unsure what to say.	• "I'm here to listen." • "We'll take this one step at a time together." • "I may not have all the answers, but I'm glad we're having this conversation."

Reminder: Not every Veteran has experienced trauma, and not every Veteran wants to discuss their military service. Avoid making assumptions and allow each Veteran to decide what they want to talk about.

Reminder: As a faith leader, you do not need to know all the answers. Often, the most meaningful thing you can do is listen, build trust, and remind Veterans that they do not have to face challenges alone.





RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO A CRISIS

While faith leaders are not expected to provide counseling or crisis intervention, you may occasionally encounter Veterans experiencing significant distress. If a Veteran experiencing or at risk of homelessness also expresses thoughts of self-harm or suicide, take those concerns seriously, respond with care, and immediately connect them with crisis support, such as the Veterans Crisis Line.

Faith leaders are also encouraged to learn how to recognize warning signs of a crisis to help identify when a Veteran may need immediate support.



RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: VETERANS CRISIS LINE

Veterans Crisis Line

The Veterans Crisis Line provides free, confidential crisis support for Veterans, service members, National Guard and Reserve members, as well as their family members and supporters. Support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Contact the Veterans Crisis Line by:

- Dialing 988 then Press 1
- Text 838255
- Chatting online at VeteransCrisisLine.net

Veterans do not need to be enrolled in VA health care or receive VA benefits to contact the Veterans Crisis Line.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: VA S.A.V.E. TRAINING

VA S.A.V.E. Training

VA S.A.V.E. is a free training developed through a partnership between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and PsychArmor. The training equips participants with the skills to recognize warning signs that a Veteran may be at risk for suicide, respond with care and compassion, and connect them with the appropriate support and resources.

Register with PsychArmor to complete the free training.

Section 4: Supporting Veterans Already Connected to Your Faith Community

Many Veterans experiencing housing instability are already connected to faith communities as members, volunteers, family members, or participants in faith-based programs.

Because these relationships already exist, faith leaders are often in a unique position to recognize concerns early and help Veterans access support before challenges become more serious.



RECOGNIZING WHEN A VETERAN MAY NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Housing instability is not always obvious. Possible signs of housing instability may include:

- Frequent moves or address changes
- Transportation challenges
- Consistently visiting the food pantry
- Requesting financial assistance
- Missing activities they previously attended regularly
- Staying temporarily with friends or family members
- Mentions of concerns about rent, utilities, housing costs, or maintaining current housing

One sign alone does not necessarily indicate that a Veteran is experiencing or at risk of homelessness, but it may provide an opportunity to check in and offer support.



STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Many faith leaders may worry about saying the wrong thing, but the most effective approach is often the simplest—and one that is already embedded in your role—leading each conversation with compassion and care.

Consider asking:

- "How have things been going for you lately?"
- "What has been on your mind recently?"
- "Is there anything making life more difficult at the moment?"
- "How can I best support you right now?"

As the conversation progresses:

- Listen without interruption.
- Allow the Veteran to decide what they would like to share.
- Focus on understanding rather than solving the problem immediately.
- Avoid making assumptions about their experiences or needs.
- Explore resources and next steps together, if appropriate.

Scenario	Suggested Talking Point
A Veteran appears isolated.	"I've noticed that we haven't seen you around as much lately. I just wanted to check in and see how you're doing."
A Veteran mentions they are experiencing a housing or financial challenge.	"That sounds stressful. Would it be helpful to talk through some possible resources or support options?"
A Veteran is reluctant to accept help.	"I respect that you want to handle this yourself. If you change your mind, please know that support is available and we're here to help however we can."
You are unsure how to respond or what to say to a Veteran.	"I may not have all the answers, but I'm glad we're having this conversation."

Reminder: A simple check-in can help a Veteran understand that they are seen, valued, and not alone.

Reminder: Support does not end with a single conversation. A simple follow-up after the initial conversation reinforces trust and helps remind Veterans that support is available if they need it.



Section 5: Talking About Homelessness

Faith leaders can play an important role in helping members of their faith communities understand homelessness. Thoughtful communication around the topic can help reduce stigma, increase understanding, and encourage action.

Many misconceptions exist around homelessness. Some people assume that homelessness is the result of poor individual choices or lack of motivation. In reality, Veteran homelessness is often caused by a combination of individual and systemic factors, including housing costs, financial hardship, health issues, and other challenges.[3,4]

Faith leaders can help their communities understand that homelessness is a complex issue and move beyond stereotypes while emphasizing dignity, compassion, and hope.

KEY MESSAGES TO COMMUNICATE

- **Homelessness can affect anyone:** Housing instability can affect people from all walks of life, including Veterans, families, and working individuals.
- **Support begins with connection and compassion:** One of the most important things communities can offer is a sense of belonging, encouragement, and support.
- **Respect and support go hand in hand:** Supporting homeless Veterans means offering them dignity and respect while helping connect them to available resources.
- **Veterans are more than their circumstances:** Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness are not defined by their housing situation. They have valuable strengths and skills to offer their communities.

SAMPLE MESSAGES FOR COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS

The following messages are designed to be adaptable across faith traditions and can be tailored for messages for worship services, reflections, community announcements, newsletters and social media posts, educational and volunteer events, and more.

Theme	Sample Message
Human Dignity	Every individual deserves to be seen and treated with dignity. One of the challenges of homelessness is that people can begin to feel invisible. As a community, we have an opportunity to remind homeless Veterans that they matter, that their lives have value, and that they do not have to face challenges alone.
Compassion and Care	Our traditions call for us to care for our neighbors and support those experiencing hardship. Providing encouragement, connection, and practical support for Veterans experiencing homelessness is one way we can put those values into action.
Community and Belonging	A home is more than a roof overhead. It is also a place of connection, belonging, and community. Every Veteran deserves not only a safe, stable place to live, but also the opportunity to feel welcomed, supported, and valued.
Reducing Stigma	Homelessness is often misunderstood. The circumstances that lead to housing instability can affect people from all walks of life. Understanding this reality helps us respond with compassion rather than judgment.
Hope	Hope often begins with simple actions of kindness and compassion: a conversation, an invitation, an offer to help, or the knowledge that someone cares. Small actions may seem insignificant in the moment, but they can have a lasting impact.
Honoring Veterans Through Action	We often recognize Veterans for their service to our country. One meaningful way we can honor that service is by ensuring Veterans facing hardships know they are not forgotten, that support is available, and that they remain valued members of our community.

Reminder: When homelessness is talked about with compassion, dignity, and accuracy, it helps reduce stigma and encourage engagement.

For additional sample messaging that can be adapted for services, reflections, community announcements, volunteer recruitment, and social media posts, reference the Faith Leader Communications Guide in **Appendix A**.

Section 6: Mobilizing Members and Volunteers to Support Homeless Veterans

Faith communities have long been places where people come together to serve others. By mobilizing volunteers and creating opportunities for engagement, faith communities can help strengthen the network of support available to local Veterans experiencing homelessness.

Volunteer efforts and events can help address practical needs while also demonstrating community care and connection.

TIPS FOR FAITH LEADERS:

- Ensure donated items reflect current community needs.
- Partner with local Veteran-serving organizations whenever possible.
- Start with one manageable activity rather than multiple projects.
- Provide volunteers with basic information about Veteran homelessness and military culture.
- Focus on service rather than recruitment.



VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

ORGANIZE DONATION DRIVES AND ASSEMBLE OUTREACH KITS

Many organizations serving Veterans distribute supplies and necessities as part of outreach to local homeless Veterans. Some organizations may also collect furniture and household supplies for recently housed Veterans as part of move-in kits. Examples of items often collected for these purposes are included in the table below.

Before organizing a collection drive, check with local housing providers and Veteran-serving organizations to ensure item donations align with current needs.

Hygiene Kits	Warm Weather Kits	Cold Weather Kits	Move-In Kits
• Toothbrushes • Toothpaste • Soap • Shampoo • Deodorant • Feminine Hygiene Products • Hand Sanitizer and Disinfectant Wipes • Disposable Razors • Washcloths • First Aid Kits and Supplies	• Lip Balm • Sunscreen • Bottled Water • Sports Drinks • Electrolyte Packets • Cooling Towels • Sun Hats and Visors • Portable Fans	• Socks • Gloves • Winter Hats • Scarves • Hand Warmers • Coats • Blankets	• Kitchen Supplies • Dishes and Utensils • Pots and Pans • Cleaning Supplies • Laundry Supplies • Towels • Bedding and Linens • Furniture

Adapt and use the customizable flyer provided in **Appendix B** to promote a donation drive and collect resources for homeless Veterans in your community.

VOLUNTEER AT EXISTING COMMUNITY EVENTS

Faith communities do not need to create new programs to make meaningful contributions. Consider volunteering at:

- Outreach events
- Stand Down events
- Veteran resource fairs
- Clothing drives
- Food kitchens and pantries
- Housing move-in efforts



ADDITIONAL WAYS TO SUPPORT VETERANS

In addition to donation drives and volunteer events, faith communities can also support Veterans experiencing homelessness by:

- Providing transportation for Veterans to medical appointments or other essential services.
- Hiring Veterans participating in VA Homeless Programs and providing local Veterans with steady employment and financial stability.
- Learning to recognize common signs of distress and knowing how to respond when a Veteran may need support.
- Encouraging Veterans to access the benefits and services they have earned.
- Downloading and sharing information about available resources with local homeless Veterans in your community. Printable outreach materials—including brochures, flyers, and wallet cards—for Veterans experiencing homelessness are available from VA's Homeless Programs Office.

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT MESSAGES

Theme	Sample Message
Service	Supporting Veterans experiencing homelessness is one way we can put our values of compassion, dignity, and service into action.
Action	We may not be able to solve Veteran homelessness by ourselves, but we can be part of the solution by supporting local efforts and helping Veterans access the resources they need.
Gratitude	One meaningful way to honor Veterans' service to our country is through acts of support, compassion, and community.
Community	When Veterans face housing challenges, they should not have to face them alone. Together, we can help ensure they feel supported and connected.

Reminder: The goal of volunteer events is not to replace existing services, but to complement them by providing community support, assistance, and opportunities for connection.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION

Faith leaders can also provide opportunities for Veterans and their families to build relationships and find support among community members and peers. Many Veterans value environments that foster trust and build connections with others who may have shared similar experiences.

Examples include:

- Hosting Veteran peer connection or networking gatherings
- Creating opportunities for Veterans to connect during existing community events
- Recognizing Veterans and military families during community activities
- Organizing community discussions focused on Veteran experiences and resources
- Inviting Veterans to share their skills, experiences, and perspectives with the community through volunteer and leadership opportunities

Reminder: When hosting a Veteran-focused event, maintain a welcoming and respectful environment, allow individuals to participate without pressure to share their personal experiences, and focus on building connections rather than solving problems.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: VA CENTER FOR FAITH

VA Center for Faith

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Center for Faith empowers houses of worship and faith-based organizations with tools, resources, and trainings to strengthen their support for Veterans in finding community, connection, and purpose.

Faith leaders interested in supporting Veterans in their communities can contact the VA Center for Faith to learn about available resources and partnership opportunities at VACF@va.gov.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: VA CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE)

Faith leaders and communities interested in supporting Veterans through their local VA facilities can learn more about volunteer opportunities through the VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement.

Find the VA facility nearest you and ask to speak with the CDCE office for more information.



FAITH-BASED PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

Partnering with Federal Agencies

When working with federal agencies, faith-based organizations retain their religious identity and independence. Federal policies support partnerships between government agencies and faith-based organizations and help ensure that eligible organizations can participate in federally funded programs with other community partners.

Faith leaders interested in pursuing formal partnerships, grants, or federally funded initiatives should familiarize themselves with applicable guidance and requirements, including Executive Orders 13279 and 13559.

Using Federal Funds

Faith-based organizations that receive federal funding must use those funds in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and grant requirements.

Organizations considering the use of federal funding should review current guidance regarding:

- Allowable use of federal funds
- Program-specific rules and requirements
- Non-discriminatory requirements
- Separation of explicitly religious activities from federally-funded activities, when required

For additional information, consult current VA guidance and program or grant-specific requirements.





Section 7: Connecting Veterans to Resources and Support

Many Veterans first disclose challenges to someone they trust. A caring conversation, connection to the right resources, or assistance navigating next steps can make a meaningful difference.

Faith leaders are not expected to be experts in housing or homelessness services. However, they can play an important role in helping Veterans identify and access the support they need.

The goal is not to have all the answers. The goal is to know where to turn when help is needed.

BUILD A LOCAL RESOURCE NETWORK

Consider identifying organizations in your community that can help before a Veteran reaches out for assistance. Building relationships with local providers can make it easier to connect Veterans to support when challenges arise.

Potential community partners may include:

Housing Resources
- Emergency shelters
- Rapid rehousing programs
- Transitional housing providers
- Affordable housing organizations
- Community housing nonprofits

Veteran-Specific Resources
- VA Homeless Programs
- Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs)
- County Veteran Service Offices
- Vet Centers
- Veteran peer support programs

Health Care and Behavioral Health Services
- VA Medical Centers
- Community health clinics
- Mental health providers
- Substance use treatment providers

Food and Basic Needs Resources
- Food pantries
- Clothing closets
- Community meal programs
- Transportation assistance programs

Employment and Legal Services
- Veteran employment programs
- Workforce development organizations
- Legal aid organizations
- Veteran legal clinics

Consider maintaining a simple directory of local resources that can be reviewed and updated annually with information for these local organizations using the template provided in **Appendix C**. Having this information readily available can help faith leaders respond quickly and confidently when a Veteran reaches out for support.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

While local resources are often the best starting point, faith leaders should also be familiar with several national resources that can assist Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

- **VA Homeless Programs:** VA Homeless Programs offers a range of programs and services designed to help Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness secure and maintain stable housing. In addition to housing assistance, these programs also offer health care, dental care, employment and legal services, case management, as well as other supportive services designed to help homeless Veterans achieve long-term stability and well-being.
- **National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV):** The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans provides free, confidential support for Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness, as well as family members, friends, and supporters seeking assistance on behalf of a Veteran. Trained counselors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help connect Veterans with both VA and local resources at 877-424-3838.

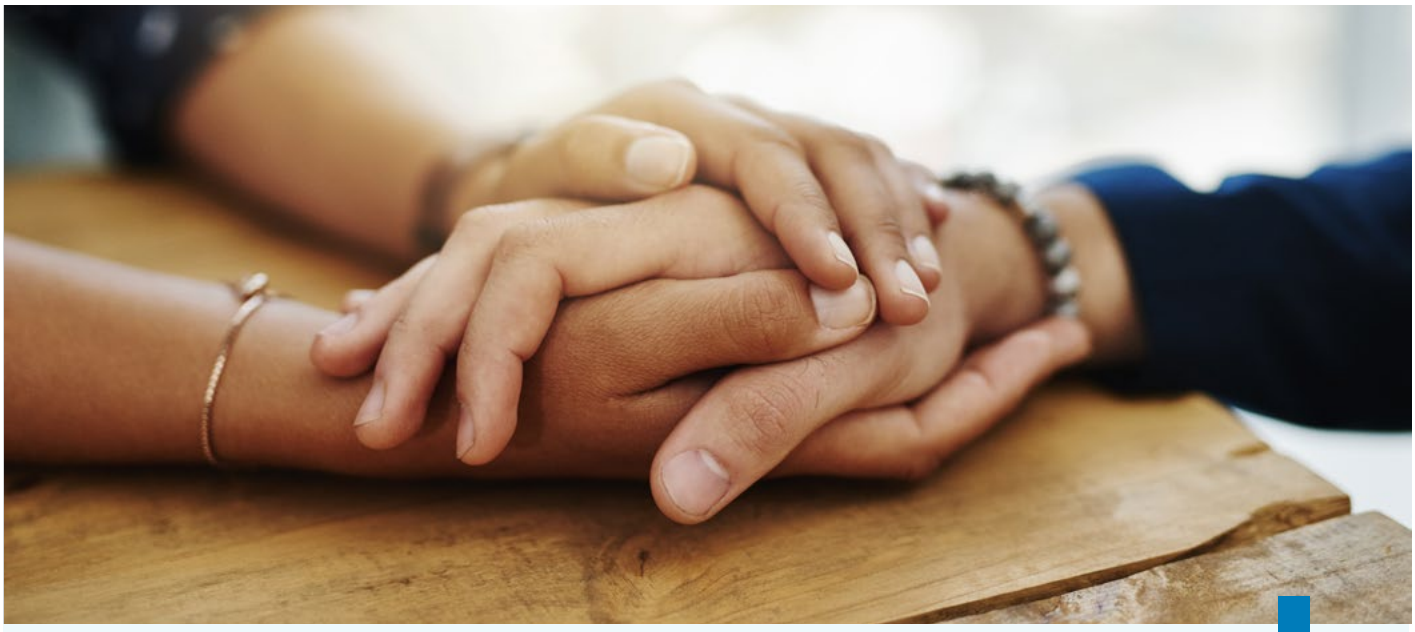
IMPORTANCE OF WARM HANDOFFS

Veterans who receive referrals to available resources may still not successfully connect with these services. Some may feel overwhelmed, uncertain about where to begin, or hesitant to reach out on their own.

A warm handoff helps to bridge that gap by actively helping Veterans connect to resources and navigate unfamiliar systems, increasing follow-through, reducing confusion, and building trust.

Scenario	Suggested Talking Points
A Veteran is interested in discussing housing assistance.	"I know of an organization that specializes in helping Veterans secure stable housing. Would you like more information about what resources they can offer?"
A Veteran feels overwhelmed.	"There may be several resources available, but we don't need to figure everything out today. Let's take this one step at a time."
A Veteran is unsure about seeking help.	"Would it be helpful if we looked at some available resources together?"

Reminder: Faith leaders do not need to know how to solve every problem. Often, the most meaningful role they can play is listening, building trust, and helping Veterans experiencing homelessness take the next step toward support.



CONCLUSION

Faith communities have long been places of hope, compassion, service, and belonging. While faith leaders are not expected to solve Veteran homelessness alone, they can play a meaningful role in supporting Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Through trusted relationships, thoughtful conversations, volunteer efforts, and connections to resources, faith communities can help ensure Veterans experiencing homelessness feel valued and supported.

Every Veteran's journey is different. By increasing understanding of Veteran homelessness, reducing stigma, recognizing signs of need, and partnering with local organizations, faith leaders can strengthen the network of support available to Veterans experiencing homelessness.

Every conversation, relationship, and act of service matters. Together, these actions can help ensure that no Veteran has to face homelessness alone.

Appendix

APPENDIX A: COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE FOR FAITH LEADERS

The following sample messages are designed to help faith leaders talk about Veteran homelessness in ways that promote dignity, understanding, and action. These examples can be adapted for services, reflections, community announcements, volunteer recruitment, social media posts, and more.

KEY COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

When discussing Veteran homelessness:

- Lead with dignity and respect
- Avoid stereotypes and assumptions
- Emphasize hope and connection
- Connect awareness with opportunities for action

MESSAGES FOR SERVICES, REFLECTIONS, AND COMMUNITY GATHERINGS

Human Dignity

Every person deserves to be seen, valued, and treated with dignity. One of the challenges of homelessness is that people can begin to feel invisible. As a community, we have an opportunity to remind Veterans experiencing homelessness that they matter and that they do not have to face challenges alone.

Compassion and Care

Many Veterans experiencing homelessness face challenges related to housing, finances, health concerns, or social isolation. Supporting Veterans is one way we can put our values of compassion, service, and care for our neighbors into action.

Community and Belonging

A home is more than a roof overhead. It is also a place of connection, belonging, and community. While housing is essential, people also need relationships, encouragement, and support. Faith communities can help create spaces where Veterans experiencing homelessness feel welcomed, respected, and valued.

Hope

Hope often begins with simple acts of kindness: a conversation, an invitation, an offer to help, or the knowledge that someone cares. Small actions can have a lasting impact and help remind Veterans that they are not alone.

Honoring Veterans Through Action
We often recognize Veterans for their service and sacrifice. One meaningful way to honor that service is by supporting Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness and ensuring they know support is available when they need it.

NEWSLETTER CONTENT

Short Version
Veterans experiencing homelessness often face challenges related to housing costs, financial hardship, health concerns, and social isolation. As a community, we can help by fostering connection, supporting local organizations, and helping Veterans access available resources.

Long Version
Homelessness can affect people from all walks of life, including Veterans. Many Veterans experiencing homelessness are working to overcome housing, financial, health, or personal challenges while navigating complex systems and services. Faith communities like ours can play an important role by providing encouragement, reducing stigma, building trusted relationships, and helping Veterans connect with support. Together, we can help ensure Veterans know they are valued members of our community.

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Every Veteran deserves a safe place to live and a community where they feel valued and supported. Learn how you can help support Veterans experiencing homelessness in our community. Small actions can make a difference. Supporting Veterans experiencing homelessness starts with compassion, connection, and community.

Homelessness can affect people from all walks of life, including Veterans. Together, we can help reduce stigma, build connections, and support homeless Veterans in our community. There are many ways to support Veterans experiencing homelessness, from volunteering and donation drives to simply helping connect Veterans with available resources. Every act of service matters.

OBSERVANCE-THEMED MESSAGES

Veterans Day
As our community honors Veterans for their service and sacrifice, we also want to recognize that some Veterans continue to face challenges related to homelessness and housing instability. Today is an opportunity to not only express gratitude for our Veterans' service but also consider how we can help ensure all Veterans feel supported, connected, and valued.

Military Appreciation Month (May)
Military Appreciation Month reminds us of the contributions and sacrifices of service members, Veterans, and their families. It is also an opportunity

to learn about the challenges some Veterans face related to homelessness and ways we can provide support within our communities.

RESPONDING TO COMMON QUESTIONS

What can we do to help?

There are many ways to support Veterans experiencing homelessness, including volunteering, participating in donation drives, supporting local Veteran-serving organizations, learning about available resources, and helping Veterans connect with services when needed.

Does one person really make a difference?

Meaningful support often begins with simple actions: listening, welcoming someone into the community, checking in, volunteering, or helping connect a Veteran with available resources. Small actions can have a significant impact.

Why should faith communities be involved?

Faith communities are often trusted sources of support and connection. By building relationships, reducing isolation, and helping Veterans access resources, we can play an important role in strengthening the support network available to Veterans experiencing homelessness.

APPENDIX B: CUSTOMIZABLE FLYER FOR SUPPLIES DRIVE

HELP SUPPORT VETERANS IN OUR COMMUNITY

Join us as we help support homeless Veterans in our community by collecting essential supplies. Access to these items supports health, dignity, and well-being. Your donation will help local organizations provide essential items to Veterans experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Every donation matters. Together, we can help ensure Veterans in our community feel supported.

REQUESTED ITEMS

Please consider donating new, unopened items such as:

- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Bar soap or body wash
- Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Disposable razors
- Shaving cream
- Washcloths
- Feminine hygiene products

COLLECTION DETAILS

Collection Dates: _____

Drop-Off Location: _____

Collection Hours: _____

QUESTIONS OR INTERESTED IN HELPING?

Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

APPENDIX C: LOCAL VETERAN RESOURCE DIRECTORY TEMPLATE

KEY NATIONAL RESOURCES

Resource	Contact Information
VA Homeless Programs	department.va.gov/homeless
National Call Center for Homeless Veterans	877-424-3838
Veterans Crisis Line	Dial 988, then Press 1

LOCAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Organization #1

Organization Name: _____

Resource Type:

- ❑ Housing
- ❑ Veteran Services
- ❑ Health Care
- ❑ Mental Health Care
- ❑ Employment
- ❑ Legal Assistance
- ❑ Food Assistance
- ❑ Transportation
- ❑ Other: _____

Contact Person & Role: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Website: _____

Services Offered:

_____

Eligibility Requirements:

_____

Referral Process:

_____

Notes:

_____

Organization #2

Organization Name: _____

Resource Type:

- ❑ Housing
- ❑ Veteran Services
- ❑ Health Care
- ❑ Mental Health Care
- ❑ Employment
- ❑ Legal Assistance
- ❑ Food Assistance
- ❑ Transportation
- ❑ Other: _____

Contact Person & Role: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Website: _____

Services Offered:

_____

Eligibility Requirements:

_____

Referral Process:

_____

Notes:

_____

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