



Elks National Veterans
Service Commission Users Guide
Ending Veteran Homelessness

**HOW THE ELKS
CAN HELP**

One Last Stand

THE FIGHT AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

Every night, more than 40,000 veterans are living on the streets. Each with a different story, they all shared a common pledge: to support and defend this country. Their service is done. Now, it's the Elks' turn to serve.

In partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Elks National Veterans Service Commission has pledged to help end veteran homelessness, and ensure that every veteran has the safe, stable home they deserve.

It's estimated that 10 percent of homeless adults in America are veterans. The VA also estimates that 70 percent of the veterans they serve have dealt with chronic homelessness and unemployment. But they've also made addressing the issue a priority. And they're counting on the nearly 800,000 Elks members to help.

"We're so excited about partnering with the Elks on this important issue facing the lives of so many Veterans," said Department of Veterans Affairs' Secretary Bob McDonald. "Partnerships like these will be critical to ensuring that all Veterans have access to safe and affordable housing."

Ready to join this fight? This booklet has everything you need to get started.



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*Want to inspire others to
get involved, too?
Show them this video!*

ENF.ELKS.ORG/ONELASTSTAND

19.3
million

veterans in the United States

3.8 MILLION

veterans have a service-connected disability

AS MANY AS **10%**
OF HOMELESS ADULTS
ARE **VETERANS**

14%

of veterans served by
the VA have families

70 % of veterans served
by the VA have dealt with
CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS
and **UNEMPLOYMENT**

Why are the Elks joining this fight?

The Department of Veterans Affairs asked the Elks to help! In September 2015, the Elks signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the VA, pledging to help end veteran homelessness.

THE GOOD NEWS

The VA has made this issue a priority, and provides health care, housing solutions, job training, rent assistance and other supportive services.

They've recruited community partners, and raised awareness.

Since many of these changes began in 2010, veteran homelessness has dropped 47%.

This means . . . ending veteran homelessness is possible! And the Elks can play a part in doing that.

Where to Start

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Every VA Medical Center has at least one person on staff whose job is to focus on serving veterans experiencing homelessness, and larger VAs have entire departments called HUD-VASH which cater specifically to these veterans. Many cities also have CRRCs, which are 24-hour resource centers for homeless centers. Find your nearest VA facility here: www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp

NATIONAL NONPROFITS

Volunteers of America www.voa.org/veterans

The Salvation Army www.salvationarmyusa.org

Catholic Charities www.catholiccharitiesusa.org

Armed Services YMCA www.asymca.org

VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS

The DAV www.dav.org/

The VFW www.vfw.org/

The American Legion www.legion.org/

Vietnam Veterans of America www.vva.org

AmVets www.amvets.org/

Paralyzed Veterans of America www.pva.org

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
www.iava.org/



LOCAL GROUPS

Many cities, counties and other municipalities have veterans affairs departments.

Look into local, independent nonprofits like veterans rehabilitation and/or transitional shelters.

Or, contact the ENVSC office and we'll put you in touch with someone in your area!



The Elks have pledged \$4 million dollars to fund the Welcome Home program, aimed at ending veteran homelessness. Here are the components of the program.

ADOPT A VETERAN

Once a veteran is home, it can be difficult to change habits and transition to a life on the street. Veterans may need assistance with independent living and skills such as budgeting, opening bank accounts, cooking, cleaning, job seeking and assistance dealing with landlords. Having an Elk as an advocate and friend can help these veterans not just stay, but thrive in their new home.

- ▶ Offer the Lodge phone number and contact information for the Lodge to veterans moving into new homes, or include it with a Welcome Home Kit (*more about that on the next page*).
- ▶ Does your Lodge volunteer at a local Stand Down? Connect with veterans there, and let them know they can call your Lodge for assistance or support.
- ▶ Follow up with veterans your Lodge assists through Welcome Home and other programs. Visit them at home, give them a call every few weeks or invite them to join in when Elks are assisting other veterans.
- ▶ For more ideas, visit the Adopt-a-Veteran page at elks.org/vets.

WELCOME HOME KITS

Most veterans move into their new homes with nothing. Elks can help veterans establish their homes by building Welcome Home Kits, which give veterans all the items they need to succeed.

- ▶ Get started by holding a supply drive to collect commonly needed items like bathroom towels, toiletries, paper products, laundry detergent and cleaning supplies.
- ▶ Know anyone who is moving? Collect furniture, dishes and other home goods they don't need and give them to a newly housed veteran.
- ▶ Beds are an especially big need for veterans moving into new homes, as donations generally can't be accepted. Hold a fundraiser to buy beds for newly housed veterans, or consider using a Lodge Grant to supplement kits.
- ▶ Moving can be tough. Offer to help transport and set up items on moving day.

The ENVSC will reimburse Lodges up to \$200 per veteran for Welcome Home Kit supplies they purchase. Access the application at www.elks.org/vets/welcomehome/cfm.

4 STEPS TO STARTING A WELCOME HOME KIT PROGRAM AT YOUR LODGE.

- ▶ **1.** Contact your local veterans facility (using the guide on page 4) and tell them your Lodge wants to help.
- ▶ **2.** Determine your essential items. The facility may have certain items in stock, so check with them beforehand. And, each veteran may have special requests (a radio, a coffee maker, sheets for their child's bed, etc.). Kits can be tailored to the needs of each veteran. Always work with the veteran and the VA to determine what is needed.
- ▶ **3.** Bargain shop! Look for sales, go to dollar stores, include donations. Adding donations to the \$200 in purchased items can make a big difference.
- ▶ **4.** Deliver your items! Assembly and delivery of the kits is a great way to get Elks member participation in the project.



INCREASED FOCUS ON 8 CITIES

The VA has asked the Elks to focus their efforts in and around the following 8 cities, which they've identified as the areas of highest need. The two programs listed on this page are only available in and surrounding these areas.

CHICAGO

WASHINGTON, D.C.

LOMA LINDA

SEATTLE

NEW YORK

LOS ANGELES

SAN DIEGO

MIAMI-DADE

ELKS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Spread the word about the Elks Veterans Emergency Assistance Program. Veterans registered with and receiving services from the Department of Veterans Affairs can apply for one-time monetary assistance to prevent homelessness or secure a home. This program can assist veterans with things like:

- ▶ Rent and security deposits
- ▶ Mortgage payments
- ▶ Essential utilities

All assistance requests must be submitted through the Department of Veterans Affairs, and signed by a VA employee and the veteran. Veterans in the 8 target cities who need this kind of assistance can contact their local VA for details and to access the form.

FOCUS GRANTS

In addition to Freedom Grants, the Elks National Veterans Service Commission is funding additional grants of up to \$4,500 available to Lodges in and around the 8 target cities identified above. Here are the requirements:

- Grant applications must focus on direct service to veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Lodges must complete a Final Report Form, including documentation of all funds spent.
- Elk involvement is required.
- A complete application and budget must be submitted and approved before funds are mailed. Lodges must complete a Final Report Form, including documentation of all funds spent.
- Applications available online at elks.org/enf/grants/cfm starting July 1, 2018 and due December 31, 2018.



ELKS NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION

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Elks pledge to never forget our nation's veterans.
The Elks National Veterans Service Commission takes that pledge one step further,
and promises service to our nation's veterans and military members,
with a special focus on service to those in need.

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