

# Eastern Pennsylvania Continuum of Care

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Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee  
Operational Policy

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**Table of Contents**

OVERVIEW: PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES ..... 2

MISSION ..... 3

GOAL ..... 3

ARTICLE 1: VLEC CORE LEADERSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES..... 4

ARTICLE 2: COORDINATED ENTRY ..... 5

ARTICLE 3: VLEC MEMBER PARTICIPATION..... 5

Community Planng .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Master list.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Case Conference .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

ARTICLE 4: APPENDICES ..... 8

APPENDIX A – Definitions and Resources..... 8

APPENDIX B - Agency Contact List..... 8

APPENDIX C - Housing Provider Contact List by Program Type..... 8

APPENDIX D – Eastern PA CoC Board Member Contacts by RHAB..... 8

APPENDIX E.1 - Integrated Veteran Master List for PA HMIS Guide – Eastern PA CoC..... 8

APPENDIX E.2 - Master List Manual Entry Tool..... 8

APPENDIX F - HOMES Service Assessment Submission Process ..... 8

APPENDIX G - HOMES Assessment Entry Guide..... 8

APPENDIX H – Eastern PA CoC VAMC SSVF Overlay Map..... 8

APPENDIX I – HUD Benmark and Criteria ..... 8

APPENDIX J – Systems Assessment and Improvement Tool..... 8

ARTICLE 5: POLICY VERSION HISTORY ..... 8

## **OVERVIEW: PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the Operational Policy is to identify the roles, responsibilities, and procedures of the Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee (VLEC), which is standing committee to the Eastern PA CoC. The VLEC focuses on four (4) primary areas to help put an end to Veterans experiencing homelessness in the continuum:

1. Establish collaborative partners and leadership with a common (joint) agenda.
2. Ensure collection, sharing, and reporting of consistent data measurements.
3. Develop resource and demand communitywide analysis systems for collaborative monitoring and improving practices to achieve federal partner standards and CoC initiatives.
4. Maintain effective communication and committee improvement of practices and member participation with the skills, resources, time, common goal, and commitment to serve the CoC.

The keys to sustainment will be reviewed through leadership, demand and resource analysis, through the SSVF Community Plan, the SSVF Gap Analysis, quarterly HUD Benchmark and Criterion Review, and the use of the Coordinated System Assessment and Improvement Toolkit. The development of short and long-term community goals with realistic timelines led by core leaders will be monitored for continuous progress and system performance.

Community leadership will be established by uniting community stakeholders within the CoC. This effort will include continued outreach to community partners and facilitation of the bi-weekly communitywide Veterans meetings. The VLEC will review community plans, goals, and objectives to achieve Federal Criterion and Benchmarks to end Veterans homelessness. The review will include the following areas of focus for Veterans:

1. Coordination with the CoC Coordinated Entry process;
2. Analysis of all supportive services initiatives, (i.e. crisis response, points of entry/coordinated entry, transitional housing, temporary housing, permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, etc.);
3. Consolidation and management of data across the CoC within the HMIS;
4. Monitor Housing Inventory Count, VA HOMES data, PIT Counts, and other data regarding outreach, case management, shelters, housing assistance, etc.;
5. Evaluate access and effectiveness of all homeless Veterans' assistance programs and community gaps in supportive services and programs;
6. Continuously monitor all systems and resources; while coordinating sustainability upon achievement of the Federal Benchmark and Criterion.

Maintaining a collaborative and effective communitywide system is an important area of focus for the VLEC to ensure that homeless Veterans are identified and engaged properly. Ensuring Veterans have access to low barrier shelters to address emergency housing needs and are

provided with permanent housing options in a timely manner is a priority for the Veterans Committee. In instances where a Veteran chooses to enroll into transitional housing, bridge housing should be offered unless service intensive transitional housing is warranted. All Veterans living in any form of TH will be engaged at least once weekly and offered a permanent housing solution. Therefore, the VLEC will also look to achieve a community systematic process that ensures future at-risk and newly identified homeless Veterans are either diverted or prevented from becoming literally and chronically homeless.

## **MISSION**

The Veteran Committee integrates into the Eastern PA CoC to support the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, who have adopted specific criterion and benchmarks to guide communities as they take action to help those with military service achieve permanent housing.

## **GOAL**

Achieving the Federal Benchmarks and Criterion is the core goal of the Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee of Eastern PA CoC. In working to achieve the Federal Benchmarks and Criterion the Committee will foster, coordinate, implement, and manage communitywide efforts and systematic sustainment processes that will ensure future Veteran homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring so that no Veteran is forced to live on the street.

1. Achieve Five Federal Criterion:
  - a. Community has identified all Veterans experiencing homelessness and included them on BNL.
  - b. Community provides low-barrier shelter immediately to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it.
  - c. Community only provides service-intensive transitional housing in limited instances.
  - d. Community has capacity to assist Veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing.
  - e. Community has resources, plans, and system capacity in place should any Veteran become homeless or be at risk of homelessness in the future.
  
2. Achieve Four Federal Benchmarks:
  - a. Chronic homelessness among Veterans has been ended.
  - b. Veterans have quick access to permanent housing.
  - c. The community has sufficient permanent housing capacity.
  - d. The community is committed to housing first and provides service-intensive transitional housing to Veterans experiencing homelessness only in limited instances.

## **ARTICLE 1: VLEC CORE LEADERSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

VLEC will use a volunteer and committee nomination process to select members of the Core Leadership team. The VLEC Core Leadership team will meet at least monthly for community strategic planning and to develop the agenda for bi-weekly Committee Meetings. The Core Leadership will participate in the Eastern PA CoC board meetings to report on the work of the Committee.

The following roles and responsibilities are key in guiding the Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee operations, maintaining community collaboration across the Eastern PA CoC, and integrating into current and incoming CoC initiatives:

**Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee Co - Facilitators:** coordinates the Veterans Committee to foster integration of committee initiatives into Eastern PA CoC Governance Charter; facilitates opportunities for CoC level planning and collaboration of communitywide systems (i.e. Coordinated Entry); maintains and updates communication distribution (listserv); collaborates with committee leadership to develop committee strategies and recurring meeting agendas; directly supports community discussions, data management with Veterans master list, case conferencing, and participates in all CoC initiatives. Ensures all reporting requirements are met for Federal partners and the CoC.

**CoC Staff Person:** Serve on the Core Leadership Team of the Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee. Facilitate coordination of community partners within the Eastern PA CoC with the Veterans Committee. Guide participation of the Veterans Committee into relevant CoC initiatives. Share information between the CoC Board, RHABs and the Veterans Committee. Complete activities to assist in the management of the By-Name Master List and the efforts towards the goal of achieving the Federal Standards to ending Veterans Homelessness.

**Data Outcomes Manager:** Serve on the Core Leadership Team of the Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee. Creates tools to collect, organize, and maximize available data resources which will help monitor Federal partner reporting requirements and the collaborative effort to reduce, prevent, and end Veteran homelessness across the CoC. Leads data management initiatives during recurring meetings, such as the Eastern PA CoC Veterans Integrated By-Name Master List. Provide trainings as needed regarding HMIS.

**HUD Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC):** Reviews the Federal Benchmark and Criterion at least quarterly. Provides expert technical assistance, consultation, and research on best practice strategies for achieving permanent housing. Announces access opportunities to training and materials and conducts webinar and regional meetings (per available funding).

**SSVF Regional Coordinator:** invitational standing member who provides regional guidance to Veteran Committee toward achieving all Supportive Services for Veteran Family program initiatives to help end Veteran homelessness.

## **ARTICLE 2: COORDINATED ENTRY**

The CoC will not establish a separate access point and assessment process for veterans; however, as Veterans enter the coordinated entry process, community agencies across the CoC will notify the Veterans Affairs (VA) and/or Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grantees so that service eligibility can be determined. This is done for the purpose of making direct placement of Veterans into homeless assistance programs, including those funded by the CoC and ESG programs, provided that the method for doing so is collaborated between VA and SSVF and the CoC, and that the method is in cooperation of CoC Coordinated Entry written policies and procedures.

VLEC members will participate in CoC and Regional Housing Advisory Board (RHAB) initiatives, trainings, regular communications, and meetings to ensure our goal of achieving Federal Benchmarks and Criterion is in collaboration and the standards established by the CoC. The VLEC coordinates with community partners to assess the needs of homeless Veterans across the CoC and the needs are discussed during community planning meetings. VLEC will strive to ensure all veteran service providers are prioritizing resources, i.e. available shelters, beds, etc. to address those with the highest needs.

## **ARTICLE 3: VLEC MEMBER PARTICIPATION**

Members of the Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee will meet on a regular basis, frequency established and changed as needed, to conduct (1) community planning, (2) management of the PA-HMIS integrated veterans' byname master list, and (3) detailed case conferencing in a manner that fosters the connection of permanent housing for veterans.

Recurring meetings will be conducted regularly via webinar and telephonic conferences. However, strategic meetings and occasional events will be scheduled in person.

1. **Community Planning.** VLEC members will meet to plan, coordinate, collaborate, implement, measure, and evaluate our effectiveness as a committee and progress toward achieving Federal Benchmarks and Criterion and integrating into CoC initiatives while using CoC approved communitywide assessment and improvements tools. Areas of focus will include (but not limited to):

- a. Recurring Federal Benchmarks and Criteria Reviews.
- b. HUD Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory County participation

- c. HUD initiatives, directives, funding, and definitions
- d. VA Gap Analysis (VA and SSVF driven)
- e. VA Community Plans and Surveys (VA and SSVF driven)
- f. CoC Coordinated Entry training, implementation, and integration
- g. CoC approved Community Systems Assessment and Improvement tools
- h. Other CoC and community initiatives

Format. Committee meetings will include taking attendance, new introductions as needed, an approved agenda for guiding discussion, and a process for capturing, archiving, and effectively using meeting minutes.

2. **PA-HMIS Integrated Veterans Byname Master list**. The VLEC maintains and manages a By-Name Master List of all literal homeless Veteran households. The master list is integrated into the PA-HMIS and should include data contributions from PA-HMIS users, VAMC homeless prevention teams, and other community members who enroll homeless veterans into services.

Data Management. Data is collected from VLEC members using unique processes and then uploaded into the master list. Formats are based on three categories of agencies providing data:

- a. HMIS User Agencies - *SEE APPENDIX E-1*: This describes the data collection, sharing, and uploading process for agencies who have signed a user agreement with PA-HMIS and are already actively uploading client information at the user level. (*Appendix E-1 is the Integrated Veterans Master List for PA HMIS Guide –Eastern PA CoC*).
- b. Non HMIS User Agencies - *SEE APPENDIX E-2*: This provides the data collection, sharing and uploading format to be used by community agencies who currently do not have access to the PA-HMIS. (*Appendix E-2 is the Veterans Master List Manual Entry Tool*).
- c. VAMC Agencies - *SEE APPENX F and APPENDIX G*: This provides the data collection, sharing, and uploading guide and assessment format for Veterans Affairs using the Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System. (*Appendix F is the HOMES Service Assessment and Appendix G is the HOMES Assessment Entry Guide*).

Frequency. VLEC members will update their veterans' data using the above-mentioned process, respectively, no later than the last working day of the week prior to each scheduled meeting. HMIS users will update data at their level using regular access and user level protocols. Non-HMIS user agencies will submit their data to either DCED or an identified VLEC member who will assist in manually uploading the data into the master list. VAMC members will submit HOMES assessment reports to DCED using an agreed upon secured methodology.

Determining/Managing Veteran status. When CoC partner agencies locate and/or enroll an individual claiming Veteran status, in addition to internal services, agency will encourage referral to VAMC (homeless prevention teams) and SSVF programs so the Veteran can be screened for eligibility determination. Veterans entered into the master list who meet SSVF and/or VA eligibility will be managed as part of all VLEC initiatives, i.e. included in Federal Benchmark and Criterion data. All agency reported Veterans, whether eligible for SSVF or VA services, will still be managed on the master list. If a Veteran refuses referral to either VA or SSVF, therefore preventing eligibility determination, the Veteran will be managed on the master list based on the community partner's screening determination of Veteran status.

Release of Information. Veterans data being entered into the PA-HMIS integrated Veterans' byname master list must sign the PA-HMIS user agreement. Providing data during the collection process indicates the agency has received veterans' release authorization.

3. **Case Conferencing**. This is a community tool designed to ensure holistic, coordinated, and integrated assistance across community providers for all Veterans experiencing homelessness in the CoC. Conferencing will focus on reviewing progress and barriers related to each Veteran's housing goal as well as to identify and track systemic barriers while strategizing solutions across multiple providers. Case conferencing will also establish procedures to reduce duplication of services and must work in synchronized cooperation with the master list.

Frequency and format. Case conferencing will occur in tandem with the master list management and will focus on the following priorities during client reviews:

- a. Veterans who are impacted with significant/unique barriers, i.e. physical and mental health vulnerabilities or at risk of harm.
- b. Veterans with longest history on the master list.
- c. Veterans fleeing domestic violence.
- d. Veterans with minor dependents.
- e. Veterans who have been missing; no response to agency contact attempts for 90 days or more will result in removal from the master list.
- f. Other remaining priorities or VLEC member's requests for client review and assistance.

**ARTICLE 4: APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A – Definitions and Resources**

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**ARTICLE 5: POLICY VERSION HISTORY**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Version #</i>	<i>Comments/ Change Log</i>
06/19/2017	1.0	Draft pending Eastern PA CoC Board review and approval vote.
8/21/2017	1.1	Initial version approved by Eastern PA CoC Board