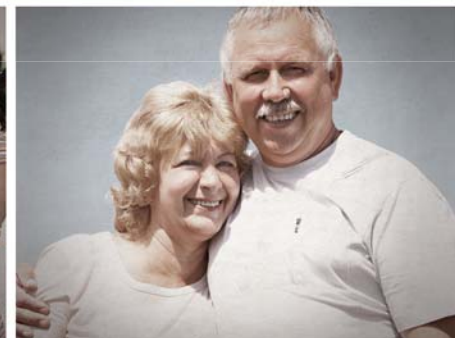


VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

# homes + hope

OPENING DOORS TO BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR HOMELESS VETERANS





## VA PITTSBURGH

IS COMMITTED TO REACHING — AND  
HELPING — VETERANS IN THE MOST  
DIFFICULT OF LIFE'S CIRCUMSTANCES.

Our comprehensive homeless programs aim to ensure that those who live on the streets, in shelters or even on the brink of homelessness can access services that will guide them to a stable lifestyle.

Whether you're a Veteran struggling with substance abuse, behavioral health issues or an unexpected setback, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System's specially trained staff are ready to help get you back on your feet.

**So call or visit us anytime.  
We're here for you.**

# MEETING VETERANS WHERE THEY ARE

We strongly believe in the importance of spreading the word about our programs and services to as many Veterans as possible. Every day, our staff visit community shelters, soup kitchens and other sites—in cities ranging from Washington, Pa., to Wheeling, W.Va.—to connect those who qualify with the right resources.

When we meet with Veterans, we assess their living situations and health needs to determine the best place and appropriate programs for them.

We also reach out to Veterans in local jails, helping them get the paperwork necessary to apply for benefits after they are released. If they need a place to stay, we help them as they consider their options. Our goal is to make sure no Veterans end up on the street while trying to rebuild their lives.

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*“We want Veterans to know we are here and what we have to offer. We do whatever we can to help them meet their goals. They served our country, and they deserve our services.”*

**MARY FRANCES PILARSKI**  
**HEALTH CARE FOR HOMELESS**  
**VETERANS COORDINATOR**





# A SAFE PLACE TO LAND

Having a regular, reliable roof over one's head is a key step toward getting back on track. We work with community organizations and agencies to provide lodging and a support system at four **transitional housing** sites. Each location has an assigned Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) social worker who manages Veterans' cases.



## SHEPHERD'S HEART VETERAN'S HOME

Veterans who stay at this downtown Pittsburgh home associated with the Anglican Church share a communal kitchen, bathrooms and common area.

*"Our goal at Shepherd's Heart is to create a small home where Veterans can encourage each other. It's very much like the basic unit of the military that works together."*

**REV. MICHAEL WURSCHMIDT**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## MECHLING-SHAKLEY VETERANS CENTER

Also known as 268, this residential facility about 40 miles outside Pittsburgh offers three meals a day, counseling, job training, life-skills development and educational opportunities. Daily transportation to VAPHS is available.

*"For anyone interested in recovering from drugs or alcohol, this is the ideal place. Everyone here is willing to help you. You're not in this mess alone."*

**JOSEPH ROBINSON**  
ARMY VETERAN, 268 RESIDENT  
AND BOARD MEMBER





*Veteran Jon Matthews and family outside their Coraopolis townhome.*



## VETERANS PLACE

This nonprofit community partner houses dozens of Veterans who share townhomes located along Pittsburgh's Washington Boulevard. Residents who have jobs are expected to apply 20 percent of their income toward rent. All have access to computer labs, a day room, job counseling and other services.

*"We provide comfortable housing—and time—for Veterans to turn their lives around. Our focus is making sure they have the resources necessary to move forward."*

**JARED SOUDER**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Through a unique partnership with the American Legion—a Veterans service organization—we provide transitional housing in the form of townhomes in Coraopolis, Pa., for Veterans who are capable of living independently, and their families.

*"The Veterans in Supportive Housing help each other out. They'll take each other to the food bank; they'll carpool. It's like a little community in itself, like a little family."*

**MARIA MARSICO**  
SOCIAL WORKER

### AT A GLANCE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

**MAXIMUM STAY:** 2 years

**LIVING ARRANGEMENTS:**

dorm-style rooms, townhomes

**MAIN LOCATIONS:** Pittsburgh & Cowansville, Pa.

**ON-SITE SERVICES:** case management, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous meetings



# VAPHS VETERAN VOICES

## DIANE MCCLOSKEY AIR FORCE

Diane McCloskey lost her job, then her home. She started drinking, spent years sleeping on friends' couches and, at one point, lived in a homeless encampment. At **Veterans Place**, she has tackled post-traumatic stress disorder from spousal abuse—and is preparing to pursue paralegal studies at Duquesne University.

*“This whole program has been a true godsend to me. This has given me a stable, very supportive environment to be in, a safe place—and one that caters to Veterans’ unique challenges.”*



## CHUCK WEIS NAVY

Chuck Weis went from living for the moment to living hand-to-mouth, draining his income with compulsive spending that ultimately landed him in shelters. With the help of VA Pittsburgh staff, he’s begun tackling a lifelong depression and, while staying at the **Mechling-Shakley Veterans Center**, saving money for his own place.

*“I’ve used the VA programs to improve myself and my self-esteem. I’m getting ready to start the second half of my life—which I feel will be a big improvement on the first.”*



# GETTING SETTLED

Our partnership with the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Allegheny County Housing Authority supplies Veterans with vouchers to help rent a permanent residence. As part of the **Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supported Housing** (HUD-VASH) program, our social workers guide Veterans through the application process and housing search, coordinate access to services and provide counseling and referrals.

HUD-VASH requires Veterans to apply about 30 percent of their gross monthly income toward rent. The housing authority covers the remainder.

## AT A GLANCE PERMANENT HOUSING

**MAXIMUM STAY:** lifelong

**LIVING ARRANGEMENTS:**  
apartments, townhomes

**LOCATIONS:** Allegheny County

**ON-SITE SERVICES:** case management



*“HUD-VASH gives Veterans the chance to get a fresh start and succeed on their own. And we’re here to provide more than housing assistance. Our work is continuous.”*

**TOM MATUSKY**  
SOCIAL WORKER



**IN THE 2009 FISCAL YEAR, NEARLY 7,000 HOMELESS VETERANS NATIONWIDE FOUND PERMANENT HOUSING THROUGH THE HUD-VASH PROGRAM.**

# VAPHS VETERAN VOICES

## OSCAR JACKSON AIR FORCE

Oscar Jackson vividly remembers his few belongings floating away from his makeshift shelter under a bridge one rainy night. Jackson, addicted to alcohol and cocaine, had left his wife and stepdaughters and ended up serving a drug sentence. Through VAPHS, he turned his attention to recovery and reconciled with his wife, Nedra. A **HUD-VASH** voucher reunited the family under one roof.

*“HUD-VASH gave me a chance to show myself that I could be responsible and see what it’s like to be normal—going to work, paying the bills. When I go to bed at night, I know I’ve done the right things.”*



## NORMAN SAMPSON NAVY, NATIONAL GUARD

Norman Sampson recalls spending the night in a shelter on his birthday—the first of several such nights. Struggling with bipolar disorder, depression, drugs and alcohol, he couldn’t keep a job. VA resources helped him piece his life together and get a new apartment. Now Sampson inspires others in similar battles: He works at a VAPHS center for homeless Veterans.

*“You need a daily support system for this to work. Without that, you won’t last long. The VA programs saved my life.”*



# MORE THAN A ROOF

VAPHS takes a comprehensive approach to Veteran care, and our homeless programs are no exception. We're committed to the well-being of Veterans and will do everything possible to ensure that they rejoin their communities as healthy individuals who are there to stay. Our services for homeless Veterans include:

**HEALTH CARE** Our nurse practitioner evaluates Veterans' physical and mental health and refers them to the appropriate teams for care, counseling or education. Homeless Veterans who qualify also can receive dental care.

**VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROGRAM** About half of homeless Veterans encounter legal problems. This program swiftly connects Veterans in local courts and jails with VA services to ensure they don't wind up on the streets—or land in more trouble down the road. For more information, call our justice outreach specialist at 412-822-1275.

**RESIDENTIAL CONTRACT BEDS** Veterans waiting for transitional or other housing don't have to worry about where they will stay. This option provides a bed at Shepherd's Heart for up to 60 days, as well as case management.

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*“There should never be a homeless Veteran. At VA Pittsburgh, we work as a collaborative team and are really dedicated to making sure Veterans aren't in that situation. It's all about them.”*

**SUSAN BYERLY**  
**NURSE**





## CALL NOW

INTERESTED IN OUR PROGRAMS?  
WE'RE READY TO HELP!

MARY FRANCES PILARSKI  
HCHV COORDINATOR  
412-822-1272

KEATHER LIKINS  
OUTREACH SOCIAL WORKER  
412-822-1409

REBECCA SHEETZ  
HUD-VASH COORDINATOR  
412-822-1270

MARY HENDERSON  
VETERAN BENEFITS COUNSELOR  
412-822-1274



VA PITTSBURGH'S HEALTH CARE FOR  
HOMELESS VETERANS STAFF LOGS MORE  
THAN 3,000 VISITS WITH HOMELESS  
VETERANS EACH YEAR.

### NATIONAL CALL CENTER

Are you a homeless Veteran? Call our **national hotline**, and a counselor will direct you to VA Pittsburgh staff, services and homeless programs. Family members and others seeking information also may use this toll-free number.

**1-877-4AIDVET**  
**(1-877-424-3838)**

# ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

## CENTER FOR TREATMENT OF ADDICTIVE DISORDERS

This intensive, 21-day behavioral health program caters to Veterans struggling with alcohol or drug addiction.

412-954-4108

## VETERANS RECOVERY CENTER

VA Pittsburgh's state-of-the-art residential living villas—the first of their kind in the nation—give homeless Veterans a place to stay for several months, as well as the time needed for recovery and finding work and housing.

412-822-1325

## ST. JOSEPH'S HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

Owned by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, St. Joseph's provides a personal room and meals for older homeless men—about half of them Veterans. Residents must be able to live independently and can stay for up to two years.

412-471-0666

## VETERANS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Homeless Veterans can turn to this community resource for transitional and long-term housing, job assistance and other support services.

412-481-8200







FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VA  
PITTSBURGH'S PROGRAMS FOR HOMELESS  
VETERANS, PLEASE CALL:

**1-866-482-7488 EXT. 221272**, OR VISIT

**[www.pittsburgh.va.gov/homeless](http://www.pittsburgh.va.gov/homeless)**



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