



Pennsylvania Guidebook for Incarcerated Veterans



Serving those who served

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I:	1-13
Using the Guide & Eligibility	1
Seeking Federal Benefits	3
Eligibility for VA Benefits During Incarceration	4
How to Reach VA	5
Other Useful Numbers & Contact Information	6
Benefits Payments While Incarcerated	6
Family Benefits – Apportionment	7
Debt Reduction	8
Gulf War Veterans	8
Veterans Housing Loans	9
Pension	9
Help Seeking Benefits	10
Resource Address/Sites	11
Financial Help	12
Legal Help	12
Women Veterans	13
SECTION II	14-22
Housing	14
Toll-free Numbers	15
Where to Start	16
Directory of Local Homeless Service Organizations	17
Directory of Homeless and Housing Advocacy Coalitions	19
SECTION III	23-28
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment	23
Health	24
Employment Assistance	26

Forward

This handbook is intended to provide current information to assist incarcerated veterans in accessing benefits through the Veterans Administration. Information for housing, treatment for substance abuse, mental health, medical, employment information and more is included in this booklet. Since it will take a significant amount of time to gather all the necessary documents it is recommended that the veteran begin immediately. To help the veteran develop this plan, phone numbers, addresses and web sites are included.

We would like to recognize and thank:

1) the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans which provided basic concepts and core information for this guide through its “Planning for Your Release” guide funded by the U.S. Department of Labor; 2) the Veterans Incarcerated Workgroup of Walla Walla, Washington, for the concept of state-specific information in its “Guidebook for Incarcerated Veterans” and for allowing the use of its guide as a template for this publication; 3) Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. for developing the first incarcerated veterans guidebook, which has inspired and informed subsequent efforts; and 4) any public domain and agency resources included in the guidebook.

Agency staff names and addresses, phone numbers and website addresses change. If you attempt to contact one of the resources in this guidebook and it is not current, do your best to obtain the current information through phone information or a Google web search. If you discover any incorrect, conflicting, or out-of-date information in this Guidebook please send the discrepancies, and updated information if you have it, to:

Vince Kane (116)
VISN 4 Homeless Coordinator
PVAMC
University & Wood Land Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19104

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SECTION I

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is for you to use to plan for your release and to keep as a reference after your release. It includes addresses, phone numbers, and web sites that you can use to find out about programs and other help available after your release. Because you may not have phone or internet access, you will need to get assistance from your assigned counselor or ask a friend or family member to help you find the information you need. Keep in mind that this guide does not include all of the services available. What is available in one area may be different from what is available in another, so be sure to check with local resources to learn about services in your area.

While incarcerated, find out which unit in your facility can help you plan for your release (often the education or transfer unit). Take advantage of the any classes that are offered, to work your on skills development and prepare your self for life after release. You don't want to be at risk of homelessness at release, so take advantage of the opportunities available to you.

Begin thinking about what specifically you will need upon release. Ask yourself these kinds of questions: Will I need housing? Will I need medical, substance abuse, or mental health services? Do I need to learn a job skill? Do I have any other legal issues, such as child support? How do I restart my VA checks or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

Make a list of your needs. Remember that this is just a tool to help you get organized. A sample list might look like this:

- I need a place to live.
- I need a job.
- I need access to benefits

- I need work clothes and tools
- I need medical care
- I want mental health and or substance use treatment
- I owe child support or have other legal problems

Think about your list as you read this guide. Who do you think can help you with each of your needs? Is there one organization that may be able to work with you, on many different things, or do you need to contact several agencies? Keep track of the steps you take, including the dates and names of people you contact for information or assistance. Although this guide provides *national and state* addresses for many organizations, we recommend you check your phone book for local, county, and state agencies that know what help is available in your area.

When contacting an agency for help by mail, email or phone, be persistent and polite in order to get results. Ask questions if information is not clear to you. Remember that many organizations are staffed by volunteers who are eager to help, but may not have the answers you are looking for. If someone cannot help you, ask if they know who can.

The Internet can also be helpful to find information about VA benefits and community resources in your area. This guide includes web addresses, when available. If computer access is not available at your facility, you can visit the public library after release.

Success depends upon you working with the system. That means work with the Department of Corrections (DOC) counseling staff and your Community Corrections Officer. This resource book will not work unless you make an effort to work with the resources that are offered you by DOC.

VA ELIGIBILITY

To determine eligibility for VA health care, contact the Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222-8387. For VA benefits eligibility, contact a VA benefits office at 1-800-827-1000 from any location in the United States.

Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active service means full-time service as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard.

Honorable and general discharges qualify a veteran for most VA benefits. Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general courts-martial may bar VA benefits. Veterans in prison and parolees may be eligible for certain VA benefits. VA regional offices can clarify the eligibility of prisoners, parolees and individuals with multiple discharges issued under differing conditions. VA benefits will not be provided to any veteran or dependent wanted for an outstanding felony warrant.

Those seeking a VA benefit for the first time must submit a copy of their service discharge form (DD-214, DD-215, or for WWII veterans, a WD form), which documents service dates and type of discharge, or give their full name, military service number, branch and dates of service.

To apply for services veterans must complete a VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits. The form may be obtained from any VA health care facility or regional benefits office, or by calling the VA Health Benefits Service Center toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387). It is also available through the World Wide Web (<http://www.va.gov/1010ez.htm>). Veterans may complete the form in person at a VA health care facility, or at home and mail it to a local VA health care facility for processing. Once enrolled, a veteran is eligible to receive services at VA facilities anywhere in the country. Additional information can be found on the VA Web site <http://www.va.gov/elig/>

SEEKING FEDERAL BENEFITS

The Department of Veterans Affairs publishes a booklet called "**Federal Benefits for Veterans and Their Dependents**" that describes the types of benefits available and lists the addresses and phone numbers for VA facilities nationwide. Write the VA Regional Office (VARO) to request a copy. This handbook contains important information, phone numbers and explanations regarding benefits. The VA Federal Benefits booklet and other VA information is available at <http://www.va.gov/>.

Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center
5000 Wissahickon Avenue
Philadelphia , PA 19101
Phone: 1-800-827-1000

Pittsburgh Regional Office
1000 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh , PA 15222
Phone: 1-800-827-1000

ELIGIBILITY FOR VA BENEFITS DURING INCARCERATION

Veterans incarcerated and incarcerated dependents may apply for the same compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) – service connected death benefits – and pension benefits as veterans who are not incarcerated. However, Congress has greatly restricted the amount of benefits that may be paid to a veteran or dependent while he or she is incarcerated. These benefits are institutionalized as part of law: *38 U.S.C Sec 5313 (a), 38 C.F.R., Sec.3.665 (a), (d)*, which reads as follows:

If a veteran is incarcerated as the result of a “felony” conviction as defined by law: “Any offense punishable by death or imprisonment for a term exceeding one year, unless specifically categorized as a misdemeanor under the law of the prosecuting jurisdiction,”

Then, the amount paid to a veteran incarcerated for a service-connected disability is generally limited by law to the 10 percent disability rate, or half the amount of the ten percent rate if the veteran’s disability rating is 10 percent. (If the veteran is rated before incarceration as 20 percent disabled or higher, he will receive only the amount payable to a 10 percent disabled veteran.) Incarcerated DIC recipients will receive one-half the amount paid to a veteran receiving compensation payments for a 10 percent-rated disability. A veteran may not receive non-service connected VA pension benefits, or any portion of these benefits, while incarcerated for a felony. However, his family may receive an apportionment of such benefits under the procedure described above. (See 38 C.F.R. Sec.3.666)

One important requirement for eligibility for VA benefits is that the veteran has to have been issued either an honorable or general discharge, or would have received one if not for reenlisting. If a veteran had two periods of service, one honorable and the other less than honorable, he may still be eligible for VA benefits based on the honorable period of service. **VA Medical Care** is not provided to veterans in prison, but VA health facilities may provide care to you after your release. Contact 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4/>, to find the medical center nearest you.

How to Reach VA

VA Regional Office and Insurance Center (Philadelphia)
5000 Wissahickon Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19144

VA Regional Office and Insurance Center (Pittsburgh)
1000 Liberty Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
1-800-827-1000

To contact the nearest VA Regional Office from anywhere in the United States, dial toll free **1-800-827-1000**. To check on the status of a disability claim, furnish the five-digit extension for the team that is processing the claim. The five-digit extension can be found in VA's letter acknowledging receipt of the claim.

VA Medical Centers



VA Medical Centers in Pennsylvania:

Philadelphia
Coatesville
Lebanon

1-800-949-1001
1-800-290-6172
1-800-409-8771

Wilkes-Barre	1-877-928-2621
Altoona	1-8777-626-2500
Pittsburgh	1-866-482-7488
Butler	1-800-362-8262
Erie	

Other Useful Numbers & contact information:

Mammography Hotline	1-888-492-7844
Health Benefits	1-877-222-8387
VA Benefits	1-800-828-1000
Life Insurance	1-800-669-8477
Education	1-888-GI BILL-1 (442-4551)
Monthly Certification of attendance	1-877-VAE CERT (823-2378)
Direct Deposit	1-877-838-2778
Loan Guaranty Certificate	1-888-244-6711
Headstones	1-800-697-6947
CHAMPVA	1-800-733-8387
Gulf War Helpline	1-800-PGW VETS (749-8387)
Hearing Impaired	1-800-829-4833
Philadelphia Web Site	www.vaphilly.com
VA's Web Site	www.va.gov

To learn more about local VA programs in Pennsylvania go to <http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4>

BENEFITS PAYMENTS WHILE INCARCERATED

There is a 60-day "**grace period**" following a conviction when you may still receive full benefits. **To avoid an overpayment**, it is important that you notify the VARO immediately when you go to prison if you are receiving payments. If you do not notify the VA and receive overpayment, you and your family will lose all financial payments until the debt is paid.

*For example, Joe is a veteran who receives a VA pension of \$807 per month. He commits a crime and is incarcerated, but doesn't tell the VA right away and keeps getting paid for 6 months. **Joe is overpaid a total of \$4,872.** After serving his sentence of 18 months, he is released and applies to the VA to have his pension restarted. The new pension rate is \$830 per month, but the VA will use that amount to start repaying the \$4,872 debt. **Joe's first real check will start 5 months after he is released and will be for \$30!** Joe has to go at least 5 months without that income.*

Your award for compensation or pension benefits should resume from the date you are released, as long as the VA receives notice of release within one year. This includes placement in a community treatment center or halfway house.

Remember, you must notify the VA when you are released to restart your payments.

APPORTIONMENT

Although legally, the veteran can only receive a portion of the full amount payable for his or her disability rating, the remaining balance may be “apportioned to the individual’s dependent family”. To apply for apportionment, send a letter to the VA Regional Office (VARO) that has jurisdiction over the veteran’s case. VA regulations clearly specify this apportionment amount will only go to family members if they can show financial need for such amount. This applies to the spouse, children, or dependent parents who are involved in the application. In deciding whether any apportionment is appropriate, the amount of the apportionment, and to whom it will go, the following factors are considered:

- The family member’s income and living expenses;
- The amount of compensation available to be apportioned;
- The needs and living expenses of other family members; and
- Special needs of any of the family members.

For example: a veteran incarcerated rated as 80 percent disability can only receive the amount he or she would get if he or she were 10 percent disabled. However, his or her family may be apportioned up to 70 percent, the difference of the 80 percent rating. (DIC may also be apportioned with similar restrictions.)

There is a 60-day “**grace period**” following conviction where the veteran, or DIC recipient, may still receive full benefits. If the veteran continues to receive benefits after the 60-day period, it will result in an “over-payment”. The VA considers it to be the recipient’s responsibility and fault if this occurs because the recipient failed to notify the VA of his or her incarceration.

Attempts to obtain a waiver in these situations of overpayment are often unsuccessful. As a rule, the veteran loses most, if not all, financial benefits until the entire overpayment is recovered by the VA. It has also been a standard procedure that the family will not be entitled to receive an apportionment until the debt is completely recovered.

For more information concerning VA debt collection rules that may affect the veteran incarcerated, telephone: 1-800-827-1000 and request a Veterans Service Organization representative or, write to a Veterans Service Organization (attention SR list). It is important that each disabled veteran receiving compensation or DIC payments promptly notify the VARO. Regular full benefit payments should begin upon release, providing the VA is notified of the veteran’s release, including placement within a community treatment center or halfway

house in the community, within one year of release. One other relevant restriction on veteran's incarcerated eligibility for service connected disability compensation is that: "No total disability rating based on un-employability, may be assigned to an incarcerated veteran".

It is important to remember that most VA decisions, including those on apportionment, can be appealed to the Board of Veterans Appeals and, if need be, to the Court of Appeal for Veterans Affairs.

Debt Reduction

To avoid an overpayment of VA benefits and creation of a debt, beneficiaries must report immediately to VA any change in their status, such as the amount of their income or net worth, the number of dependents, divorce, or withdrawal from school.

All debts must be repaid to VA. VA may assess interest and administrative fees, which will be added to the original amount of the debt until the debt is cleared.

Failure to repay a debt will affect one's credit. Collection of the debt may be turned over to a collection agency, or the debt may be offset by withholding federal income tax refunds or other federal payments, including federal pay and pension.

Gulf War Veterans

Gulf War Period: Beginning August 2, 1990, and ending on a date to be established by Presidential proclamation or by law. Active-duty personnel and reservists called to active duty during this period are eligible for the full range of wartime benefits after 90 days of active duty service.

Compensation: Gulf War veterans with an undiagnosed illness of at least six-month duration that manifests itself by Dec. 31, 2006, may be eligible for compensation.

VA will compensate Gulf veterans who served anytime from Aug 1, 1990, through July 31, 1991, in the Southwest Asian theater of operations of the Gulf War and develop amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease).

Pension Eligibility: Provides that service in the Gulf satisfies the service requirements for VA pension program, a needs-based benefit for wartime veterans who are not able to work, and for the needy survivors of wartime veterans. (See pages 12-14.)

Veterans Health Benefits: Three environment referral centers at VA medical centers have been established to treat Gulf War veterans with unusual symptoms possibly related to environmental contaminants.

Readjustment counseling is offered to Operation Desert Storm/Shield veterans.

Gulf War veterans are eligible for one-time treatment of dental conditions after discharge from service if they have 90 days of active duty.

Veterans Housing Loans

Programs: Provides VA guaranteed home loan eligibility after 90 days for active-duty members and members of the Reserves and National Guard activated in connection with the Gulf War.

Pension

Benefit: Pension is payable to wartime veterans with limited income and assets who are permanently and totally disabled from non service-connected causes. Veterans age 65 or over need not meet the disability requirement.

Pension Programs: Public Law 73-2, *Old Law*.
Public Law 86-211, *Protected Pension*, effective June 1, 1960.
Public Law 95-588, *Improved Pension*, effective Jan. 1, 1979.
- any application for pension after Jan. 1, 1979, comes under the Improved Pension law.

HELP SEEKING BENEFITS

If you would like to get benefits or think you have a pending claim before the VA, it is best to get professional help to assist you.

- Many Veterans **Service Organizations** have trained staff who can help you with your VA claim, and can legally represent your claim before the VA. Some also help homeless and at-risk veterans find the support services they need. For more information regarding Veterans Service Organizations contact the Regional Office.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Although we encourage you to seek the aid of a service representative, you may choose to apply for VA benefits on your own. Write the VARO or find the forms online at: <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/>. You can also apply for certain benefits online at: <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>.

Below are brief descriptions of forms needed to file for certain VA benefits. Be sure you use a return address where mail will get to you as quickly as possible. Make photocopies of all forms or your records before sending your packet to the VARO nearest you.

Forms can be found on the internet at www.va.gov

- **Standard Form-180 – Request Pertaining to Military Records** - is used to get copies of your Record of Discharge (DD-214), military personnel and medical records. You will need a copy of your DD-214 when applying for any benefits. Requests may also complete online at <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>.
- VA Form 10-10EZ Application for Health benefits. The form may be obtained from any VA health care facility or regional benefits office, or by calling the VA Health Benefits Service Center toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387). It is also available through the World Wide Web (<http://www.va.gov/1010ez.htm>).
- **VA Form 21-526 - Application for Compensation or Pension**- must be filed to apply for compensation -or pension. This form, along with your DD-214 and the following forms should be mailed directly to the VARO nearest your release destination 30 to 45 days before our release.
- **VA Form 21-4138 - Statement in Support of Claim** - lets you explain why you deserve the benefits you are asking for because of your disability or disorder. It is best to have an experienced service representative help you complete' the form.

- **VA Form 21-4142 - Authorization for Release of Information** - If you have received medical or mental health care, that may be relevant to your claim, from anyone other than a VA Medical Facility, you need to fill out a **VA Form 21-4142** giving permission for release of medical records to the VA..
- **VA Form 10-10EZ - Enrollment for Medical Benefits** - is used by the VA to determine if you can receive medical benefits. Complete the form and bring it with you to the VA medical facility where you will seek evaluation for treatment.
- **VA Form 28-1900 - Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Veterans** - is needed to apply for the vocational rehabilitation program to help veterans who were disabled during their service reach maximum independence in daily living, to learn the skills needed to get a job, and to find and keep a job. Send Form 28-1900 to the VARO in your area 10 to 15 days before your release.
- **VA Form 70-3288 - Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Claimant's Records** - is used to get records relevant to your claim from VA facilities (regional offices, medical centers, outpatient clinics, and vet centers). Request a fee waiver under section 38 C.F.R. Sec.1.526 (h), which requires the VARO to provide veteran with one set of his or her records free of charge.

Resource Addresses/Sites

US Dept of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) www.va.gov/

Veterans Health Administration – VISN
<http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4/>

The American Legion - Dept of PA <http://www.pa-legion.com/>

Disabled American Veterans – Dept of PA
http://www.dav.org/membership/dept_chapt_links.html /

Veterans of Foreign Wars – Post Locations
www.vfw.org/

Vietnam Veterans of America – Pennsylvania State Council
http://www.vva.org/map2/PA_3.html

Social Security Administration www.ssa.gov/

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans www.nchv.org/index.cfm

FINANCIAL HELP

- The American Legion provides **Temporary Financial Assistance**, (TFA) from its national headquarters to help maintain a stable environment for children of veterans. To obtain an application, look in the phone book to contact a local post, or contact the National Headquarters to find the post nearest you.
- If you are unemployed with little or no income, you may be able to get **food stamps**. A person may normally qualify for \$85 to \$100 worth of food stamps per month. Call the toll-free information number at 1-800-221-5689, or find a list of food stamp hotlines for each state at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/>. You can also contact the local Department of Human Services, many drop-in shelters, or legal aid services to ask for an application.
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** benefits can be applied for before your release, even though you won't receive the benefits until after you are released. Food Stamps can be applied for together with SSI. Normally, it takes about three months to review an application, so apply well before your release date. It is best to get help filling out the application. For detailed information or assistance, call 1-800- 772-1213, call or your local social security administration office listed in the phone book blue pages, or go to: <http://www.ssa.gov/notices/supplemental-security-income/>.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** has a program called Emergency Food and Shelter Program to help prevent homelessness. Contact the local Office of the Mayor *or* United Way to ask who awards this money in your area and what the rules are.

LEGAL HELP

Veteran status issues:

- You should talk to a **Veterans Advocate Service Officer** for help with discharge upgrades, seeking benefits, and filing a VA claim.

Other legal issues:

- Most law is state-specific. Most common legal problems are governed by the law in the state where you live or where the problem occurred. When looking for legal help, make sure that information you find applies to your state, or that the lawyer or other service provider is qualified to work in your state.

- The **American Bar Association** has a web site with guidelines about free legal services and links to directories of legal aid offices and pro-bono programs. Go to: www.abanet.org
- **Legal Services or Legal Aid offices** have staff lawyers to provide free legal help to poor clients. The lawyers are usually experts in the types of problems that poor clients often have. Look in the yellow pages for a local Legal Aid office or check online for the program nearest you.
- **Pine Tree Legal Assistance** has an online list of organizations across the nation that provides free legal help to clients who qualify. Go to www.ptla.org/links/services.htm.
- Lawyers in private practice sometimes volunteer in "pro-bono" programs to take cases for poor clients free of charge. Check the yellow pages to contact your **Local Bar Association** to learn if there is a pro-bono program in your community, or go to www.abanet.org/barserv/stlobar.html.

WOMEN VETERANS

- Most VA **Medical Centers** and readjustment offices have a designated Women Veterans Coordinator to assist women veterans in accessing VA benefit programs and healthcare services. Call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4/>, to find the medical center nearest you.
- Many women in prison had similar histories, problems, and personal issues before their arrest and conviction. Mentors with **Women in Community Service** (WICS) help women preparing to leave prison and those who are just getting back into society. WICS' prison programs help women think about their behavior, gain job skills, and build self-esteem. For the Philadelphia Region (**DC,KY,MD,PA,VA,WV**) contact **the U.S. DOL, Job Corps** at 1-800-283-9427 or go to www.wics.org to find the nearest WICS program.

SECTION II

HOUSING

It is important to know that you have a place to go when released. The first step in returning to the community is finding a place to stay. This section includes ways to locate transitional programs, and permanent housing assistance.

Transitional or temporary housing can serve as a step toward full independence upon your release. However, there are often waiting lists for housing assistance programs, so you should ask about applying as soon as possible. In Pennsylvania the VA Medical Centers have residential rehabilitation and transitional housing programs that can assist with your adjustment to the community. Each program is unique and you will want to contact the homeless coordinator to learn more about admission criteria to either our Homeless Domiciliary Programs or our Grant & Per Diem Programs and other VA Residential Rehabilitation Services. Contact information for the individual homeless coordinators can be found at:

<http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4/>

Emergency and Transitional Housing

The best idea is to never need emergency shelter and work closely with the DOC counseling staff as you make a community re-entry plan. If you need emergency shelter, you can find it several ways. One is to look in the local yellow pages under mission or shelter. Another source is to use the First Step web site. This web site not only helps with housing, but is a wealth of information on income assistance, food, employment services, child care, mental health and counseling services, health care assistance, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, life skills and HIV/AIDS services. The web site is aspe.hhs.gov/homeless/index.shtml.

- To find out if there are homeless veteran service providers in your area, call 1-800- VET-HELP, write to NCHV, 333½ Pennsylvania Ave., SE Washington, DC 20003-1148, or go to www.nchv.org. Look in the phone book yellow pages under "Social Service Organizations" for local shelters or organizations that may be able to help.
- Look in the front of the phone book under local, city, or county government Department of Social Services or "Human Services" or call the County Commissioner's Office for information about local low-income housing coalitions or homeless advocacy groups who may know what is available.
- To find a list of emergency shelters for men, women and families in every state, check the **Department of Housing and Urban Development** online at www.hud.gov/homeless/hmlsagen.cfm.

Other Helpful Resources

This section includes resources that can help you get back on your feet. Remember to check the phone book for local, county, and state agencies that know what services are available in the area to assist you. Some organizations may have waiting lists, require an interview, or have specific rules about whom they serve. It is best if you **start asking about services and requirements now**, so that you will be prepared when you are released. You may even ask if your name can be put on a waiting list when you get closer to your release date. **Just for Veterans**

Helpful TOLL - FREE NUMBERS

Crisis and other toll-free numbers are often listed in the front cover or first few pages of the phone book. You may also want to check under "Social Services" in the blue or yellow pages for hotlines and local numbers.

US Department of Veterans Affairs — www.va.gov

- Benefits: 1-800-827-1000,
- Medical Centers: 1-877-222-8387, or <http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4/>
- Persian Gulf War Helpline: 1-800-749-8387

Focus On Recovery Helpline - A 24-hour national alcohol and drug abuse addiction and treatment hotline: 1-800-888-9383.

National AIDS Hotline - Talk to someone who knows about HIV/AIDS and can tell you about AIDS services in your city or state: 1-800-822-7422

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans — www.nchv.org, 1-800-838-4357

National Suicide Support Number - 1-888- 784-2433 (1-888-SUICIDE)

WHERE TO START

Check the local phone book yellow pages under "Homeless" or "Social Service Organizations" for a list of many local organizations that offer different services, which may include clothing, public transportation tokens, emergency shelter, and more. You may need to contact several agencies to find all the services you need. Services provided by *government* agencies are listed in the blue pages found near the front of the phone book. Check with your local Public Assistance Office to find out what programs are available and what their guidelines are. We have included some guidance below, but your local organizations are your best resources. **Remember, it never hurts to ask!**

- Every **VA Medical Center** has a **Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Coordinator** who is responsible for helping homeless veterans access VA and community-based care to end homelessness among veterans. The HCHV program provides outreach, clinical assessments and referrals for medical and mental health care, long-term transitional residential assistance, case management and employment assistance with linkage to permanent housing. To locate your nearest HCHV Coordinator call 1-877-222-8387 or go to www.va.gov/homeless.
- **Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)** provides assistance with Veterans benefits & entitlements information, VA claims process, representation and advocacy, Trauma (PTSD) counseling, Veterans Homes for those in need of nursing care, and employment assistance through federal funded reintegration projects. Call 1-800-562-2308 or go to www.va.gov.
- **Coalition for the Homeless** has a directory of shelters and homeless assistance programs online. This does not list every program in the country, be sure to check your phone book for local programs. The following are those listed for the State of Pennsylvania.

Directory of Local Homeless Service Organizations

CENTRAL SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY

Haven Ministry Inc.

1043 South Front Street R R 3
Box 1-A-1 Sunbury, PA 17801
Phone: 570-286-1672
Fax: 570-286-3065
Email: cathysbn@ptdprolog.net

ERIE

The Community of Caring

245 East 8th St
Erie, PA 16503-1003
Phone: 814-456-6661
Email: caring@velocity.net

PHILADELPHIA

The Employment Project

Contact: Leona Smith
246 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
Phone: 215-923-1694
Fax: 215-923-5960
Email: Lenci1@aol.com

Housing Association of Delaware Valley

1500 Walnut Street, Suite 601
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Anthony Lewis, Managing Director
Phone: 215-545-6010
Fax: 215-790-9132
Email: hadv@libertynet.org

Project H.O.M.E.

1515 Fairmount Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19130

Phone: (215) 232-7272

Email: HN5672@handsnet.org or prihome@aol.com

PITTSBURGH

HSP

Director: Mike Sallows

3017 Cohutta Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Phone: 412-761-6497

Email: homeless@nb.net

Operation Safety Net

Mercy Hospital

1400 Locust Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Phone: 412-232-5739

Fax: 412-232-3726

Email: jwithers@mercy.pmhs.org

lsheets@mercy.pmhs.org

Medical Director: James S. Withers, M.D.

Program Administrator: Linda M. Sheets, M.P.M.

SCRANTON

St. Francis of Assisi Kitchen

500 Penn Ave.

Scranton, PA 18509

Phone: 717-342-5556

Fax: 717-963-8832

YORK

Helping Hand for the Homeless, Inc.

The Helping Hand for the Homeless was established in 1989 to serve homeless people in York County, Pennsylvania. Helping Hand provides hot meals, sleeping bags, clothing, hygiene kits, and access to temporary day work.

413 W. King Street

York, PA 17404

Phone: 717-846-9275
Email: kemp@cyberia.com

Directory of Homeless & Housing Advocacy Coalitions.

The following is a list of Homeless and Housing Advocacy Coalitions for the State of Pennsylvania. Not all of these coalitions provide direct services, but they may be able to tell you about local programs or services.

People's Emergency Center

Gloria Guard, President
325 North 39th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Tel: 215-382-7522
Fax: 215-386-6290
www.pec-cares.org

Coalition for Immigrants Rights

Kathleen Lucas
Executive Director
140 Roosevelt Ave; #202
York, PA 17404
717/845-5509
717/845-5499
circleyork@aol.com
<http://members.aol.com/cicleyork/>

Housing Assistance & Resources Program

Ruth Shenk
Housing Specialist
Ruth Shenk
Housing Specialist
39 N. 12th St.
Lebanon, PA 17046
717/273-9328
717/273-9936

Pennsylvania Coalition to End Homelessness

Kay Pickering
Volunteer Staff Person
315 Peffer Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
717/233-3072
717/233-3261

Federal American Coalition of Tenants
George Mose
100 Sheridan Square, Suite 200
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412-361-1761

Philadelphia Committee to End Homelessness

*Roosevelt Darby, Jr. NCH Board Member
P.O. Box 15010
802 N. Broad St.
Philadelphia, PA 19130-2235
215/232-1867
215/232-1824
rdarbyjr@hotmail.com

Kensington Welfare Rights Union

Cheri Honkala
Executive Director
P.O. Box 50678
Philadelphia, PA 19132
215/203-1945
215/203-1950
kwru@kwru.org
www.kwru.org

Harrisburg Center For Peace and Justice

Kay Pikering
Housing Counselor
315 Peffer Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
717/233-3072
717/233-3261

PA Low Income Housing Coalition

Elizabeth G. Hersh
Executive Director
2 S. Easton Rd
Glenside, PA 19038
215/576-7044
215/887-8638

lizhersh@palihc.org
www.palihc.org

Homeless Advocacy Project

Marsha Cohen
Executive Director
1424 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
215/523-9595
215/981-0866
HAP@libertynet.org
www.libertynet.net/~HAP

Community Human Services

Phillip Pappas NCH Board Member
374 Lawn St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-4297
412/621-4706
412/621-7137
Phil@CHSCorp.org

Salvation Army - provides services, including shelter and transitional housing, for homeless individuals and families. For local services and information contact:

Eastern Pennsylvania
701 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123
Western Pennsylvania
424 Third Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

- **United Way** - provides a variety of services through local organizations. Check the phone book for a local post or locate local organizations online at www.unitedway.org.
- **Local churches and faith-based organizations**, such as Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, and Volunteers of America, may have a variety of programs to assist you. Find these organizations by calling your county or city Department of Social Services. Check the blue pages of the phone book for the number.
- **Philadelphia Housing Authority**
The largest permanent housing program in Philadelphia is the Philadelphia Housing Authority, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). There are two types of housing available - conventional public housing and Section 8 housing. Conventional public housing is housing available in the public housing developments or in scattered sites. The Section 8 program involves a rent

subsidy to households in privately owned rental housing. Applicants will be placed on a waiting list upon completion of the application. Applications for public housing and Section 8 are offered to residents in homeless shelters. Homeless applicants are then placed on a priority waiting list.

PHA

Carl Greene, Executive Director
12 S. 23rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
684-4000

Central Admissions

3010 Market Street, 2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19104
215-684-4477

Section 8 Program

3010 Market Street, 2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19104
684-4300

Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh

200 Ross St., 9th Floor

- Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412.456.5000
Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
HACP Information Line: 412.201.HACP (4227)
General e-mail: info@hacp.org

Also, look in the phone book **yellow pages** under "Social Service Organizations" for local shelters or organizations that may be able to help. Additionally, look in the phone book **blue pages** under local, city, or county government Department of Social Services or "Human Services" or call the County Commissioner's Office for information about local low-income housing coalitions or homeless advocacy groups who may know what is available.

SECTION III

SUBSTANCE ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

If eligible for veterans' benefits:

- Contact the Homeless Veteran Services Coordinator at the local **VA Medical Center** or **Vet Center**. Call 1-877-222-8387 to or go to <http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4/>, to find the medical center nearest you.

Medical Centers:

Medical Centers:

Philadelphia	1-800-949-1001
Coatesville	1-800-290-6172
Lebanon	1-800-409-8771
Wilkes-Barre	1-877-928-2621
Altoona	1-8777-626-2500
Pittsburgh	1-866-482-7488
Butler	1-800-362-8262
Erie	

<http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4>

If not eligible for veterans' benefits, the following sources may be able to tell you where you can go to get help:

- The Department of Health and Human Services **Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service** can refer you to local programs. Call 1-800-662-4357.
- **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill** lists community mental health services providers at: www.nami.org, or call 1-800-950-6264.
- **National Mental Health Association** offers support groups, rehabilitation, socialization, and housing services through 340 community organizations located across the country. Call 1-800-969-NMHA, or find a local office online at www.nmha.org.

Vet Center Field offices: Vet Centers serve veterans and their families by providing a continuum of quality care that adds value for veterans, families, and communities. Care includes professional readjustment counseling, community education, outreach to special populations, the brokering of services with community agencies, and provides a key access link between the veteran and

other services in the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. To locate a Vet Center in PA please visit <http://www.va.gov/RCS/Pennsylvania.htm>

The Adjutant General's Office

Veterans Administration Center, Wissahickon Avenue & Manheim Streets
P. O. Box 42938, Philadelphia, PA 19101
Phone (215) 381-3040; fax (215) 381-3492

The Adjutant General's Office

Jewelcor Building, Second Floor
100 N. Wilkes-Barre Boulevard, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701-2605
Phone (570) 826-6244; fax (570) 821-4047

The Adjutant General's Office

Veterans Administration Building
Room 432F, 1000 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4003
Phone (412) 395-6225; fax (412) 395-6224

HEALTH

If eligible for veteran's benefits:

- We encourage you to enroll in the VA Health Benefits System as soon as you are released. Every **VA Medical Center** has a **Health Care for Homeless Veterans Coordinator** who helps veterans and their families find resources inside and outside the VA Health Care system. Call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov/visn4/>, to find the medical center nearest you.

Altoona

James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center
2907 Pleasant Valley Boulevard
Altoona, PA 16602-4377
(814) 943-8164
(877) 626-2500 (toll free)

Butler

VA Medical Center
325 New Castle Road
Butler, PA 16001
(724) 287-4781 or 1-800-362-8262

Coatesville

VA Medical Center
1400 Black Horse Hill Rd.
Coatesville, PA 19320-2096

(610) 384-7711
(800) 290-6172

Erie

VA Medical Center
135 East 38 Street, Erie, PA 16504
(814) 868-8661 or 1-800-274-8387

Lebanon

VA Medical Center
1700 S. Lincoln Avenue
Lebanon, PA 17042
(717) 272-6621 or 1-800-409-8771

Philadelphia

VA Medical Center
University and Woodland Aves.
Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 823-5800 or 1-800-949-1001

Pittsburgh

University Drive C
Pittsburgh, PA 15240
(866) 4VAPITT or (866) 482-7488

Wilkes-Barre

VA Medical Center
1111 East End Boulevard
Wilkes Barre, PA 18711

If ineligible for veteran's benefits, free or low-cost health care may be available from the following sources:

- **Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)** can tell you where to find health care facilities for the homeless. Check the phone book blue pages under local, city, or county government for the number.
- **National Health Care for the Homeless Council** has a list of health care providers working with homeless people across the nation. For a list of providers in your state, go to www.nhchc.org.
- **Free clinics** are run by many local organizations and communities. Look in the phone book blue pages under "Public Health" to contact local government office for clinics in your area.

Special Health Information for Veterans:

If you think you may be at risk for AIDS and HIV infection after your release, contact the nearest VA Medical Center to get tested, and seek counseling. Those at highest risk for AIDS and HIV infection are:

- people who share needles or syringes to inject drugs or steroids
- men who have sex with other men;
- those born to mothers who have HIV
- people who received blood transfusions before 1985;
- anyone who has sex with anyone who is at risk for HIV / AIDS.
- Veterans, homeless, and incarcerated people are at high risk for **Hepatitis C** (HCV), a serious disease that can cause cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer. If you think you are at risk after your release, contact the nearest VA Medical Center to get tested and seek HCV counseling. You are at risk if:
 - you ever used a needle to inject drugs;
 - you had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992;
 - you were a health care worker and had contact with blood;
 - you were on long-term kidney dialysis;
 - your mother had hepatitis C when she gave birth to you.
- The Veterans Health Administration also recommends testing if:
 - you are a Vietnam-era veteran;
 - you have had exposure to blood on your skin;
 - you have had multiple sex partners;
 - you have tattoos or body piercing;
 - you have ever snorted cocaine;
 - you have liver disease;
 - you have a history of drinking a lot of alcohol;
 - you have had an abnormal liver function test.

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

Finding a job may be hard and can seem overwhelming, but it is possible and very important! When released you may find that you are completely starting over. You should ask for job counseling and training while incarcerated so you are prepared to go to work when released. Don't wait until you get out to start thinking about what you will do, start planning now!

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Department of Labor's (DOL) One-Stop Career Centers offer the convenience of one-stop shopping for your employment and training needs. One-Stop Career Centers offer a variety of job finding resources in one place.

Services at One-Stop include:

- Internet access to thousands of job listings in NJ and nationwide.
- Computerized job matching and direct referral to job opportunities.
- Career counseling and job search workshops.
- Assistance writing and publicizing your resume.
- Assistance accessing training and retraining resources.

The One-Stop Career Center is a new approach to the delivery of employment and training services. State, county and local government agencies, community colleges, local non-profits, business and labor have joined forces to make it easier to find work, get training or change careers.

There are one-stop centers and affiliates located throughout Pennsylvania. A listing of PA centers is available on the web at www.servicelocator.org

- The **VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment** services help veterans with service-connected disabilities by providing job training and counseling to those who have an employment handicap. Services include help finding a job, on-the-job training, job development, and vocational training. If you are not eligible for these services, a VA counselor may help you find other options, goals, or programs. Contact your VA Regional Office (VARO) at 1-800-827-1000, or go to <http://www1.va.gov/directory/guide/division.asp?dnum=3>.
- The **VA Veterans Industries and Compensated Work Therapy programs**, offers structured work opportunities and supervised therapeutic housing for

at-risk and homeless veterans with physical, mental health and addictions problems. VA contracts with private industry and the public sector for work by these veterans, who learn job skills, re-learn successful work habits, and regain a sense of self-esteem. Veterans are paid for their work and given assistance with employment in the community. In New Jersey, the VA currently has Veterans Industries Programs located throughout Central New Jersey. For further information go to www.vetsinfo.com.