



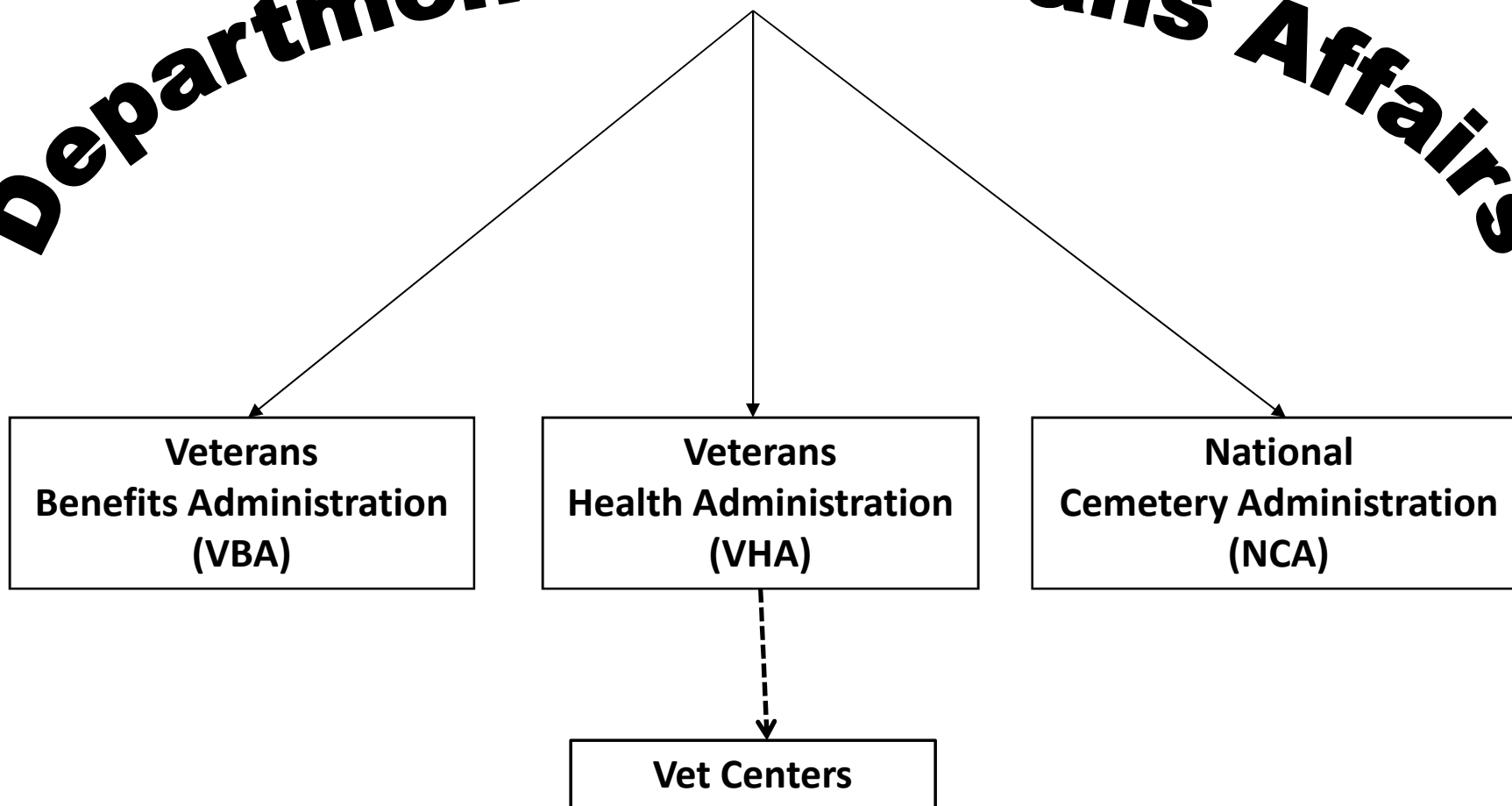
**Dept. of Veterans Affairs**  
**Accessing Services for**  
**Homeless Veterans**

**Julie Irwin, LCSW**  
**NY / NJ Veterans Integrated Service Network 3**  
**Homeless Care Line Manager**



# An Overview

## Department of Veterans Affairs





## Important Facts

- Every VA benefit must be applied for – none are automatic
- Military service must be verified
- Character of discharge is important
- National Guard & Reserve are eligible if activated “federally” and complete the term of duty



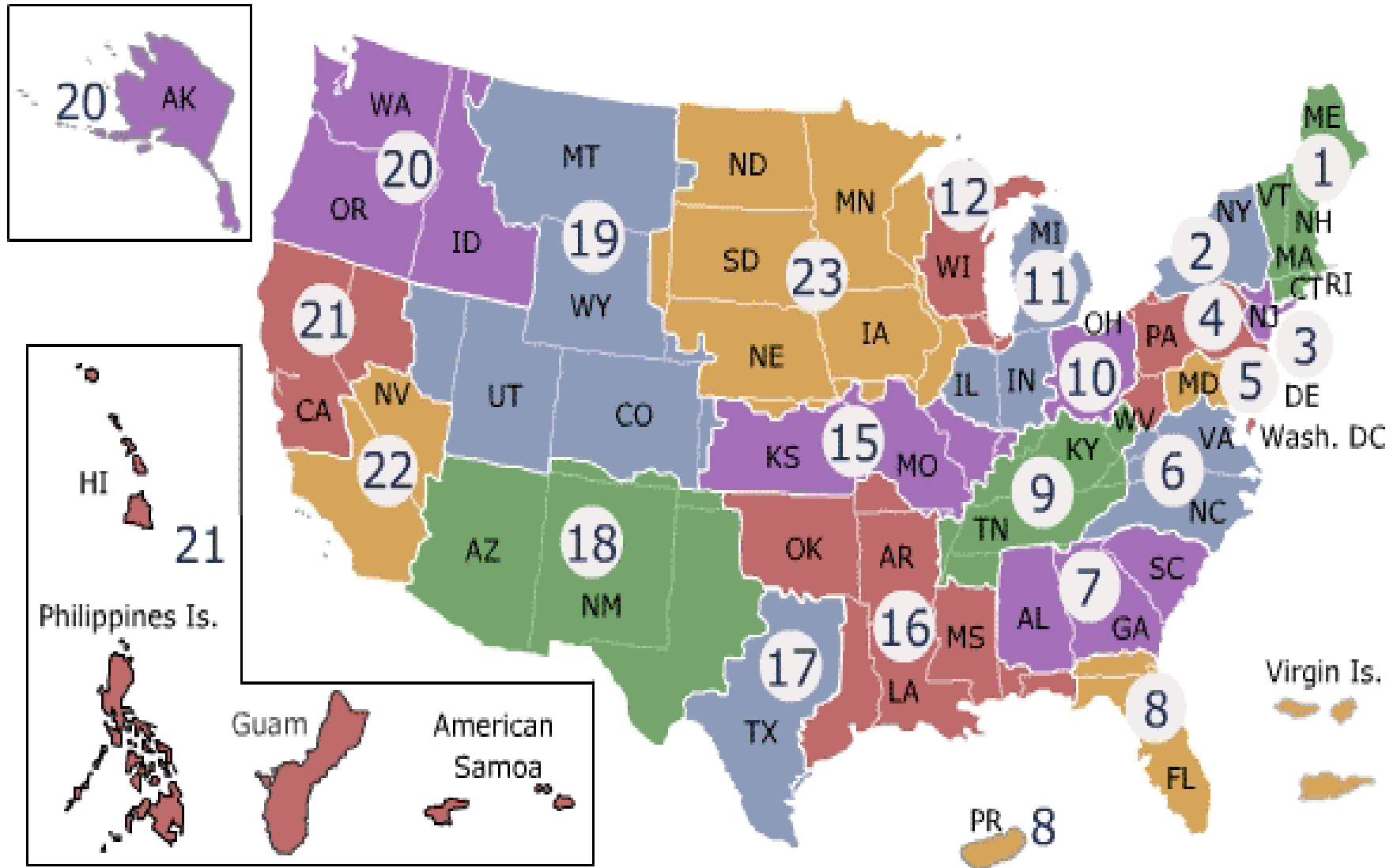
# Eligibility for VA Healthcare

- Minimum duty requirements – 24 continuous months or the full period for which they were called to active duty for those entering service after 10/16/1981
- Prior to 10/16/1981 – one day of service is required
- Don't try this at home...lots of exceptions and special circumstances exist
- There are eligibility specialists at every VA medical center.

# Discharge Upgrades

- Application must be within 15 years of the discharge
- The Department of Veterans Affairs cannot assist with discharge upgrades
- Refer to:
  - Veterans Service Organizations
  - State Office / Division of Veterans Affairs

# Veterans Health Administration



# Veterans Integrated Service Network:

## VISN 3





# VA Health Care Services

- Primary and Specialty Medical Care
- Mental Health Treatment (inpatient, outpatient, residential)
- Substance Abuse Treatment (inpatient, outpatient, residential)
- Pharmacy Benefits
- Homeless Services including Homeless Veterans Dental Initiative
- Returning Veterans (OEF/OIF/ND) Care Coordination
- Women Veterans Care Coordination





# Defining Homelessness

## **A Homeless Veteran:**

- Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
- Or resides in a public or privately operated shelter or institution;
- Or resides in a place not designed for use as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

## **A Chronically Homeless Veteran:**

- Has been continuously homeless for 1 year or more or has had at least 4 episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years.

\* Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)



# Overview of Homelessness

- 62,619 Veterans estimated to be homeless on any given night (2012 HUD AHAR)
- Homelessness is often a consequence of multiple psychosocial factors, including unstable family supports, job loss, inadequate job skills, health problems, substance use disorder, or other mental health concerns.
- Homeless services cannot be provided in isolation.
- Homeless services must be comprehensive:
  - Recovery-oriented; support physical and mental health stabilization and treatment
  - Provide substance use disorder treatment
  - Enhance independent living skills
  - Address vocational rehabilitation and employment maintenance
  - Assist with housing searches and placement

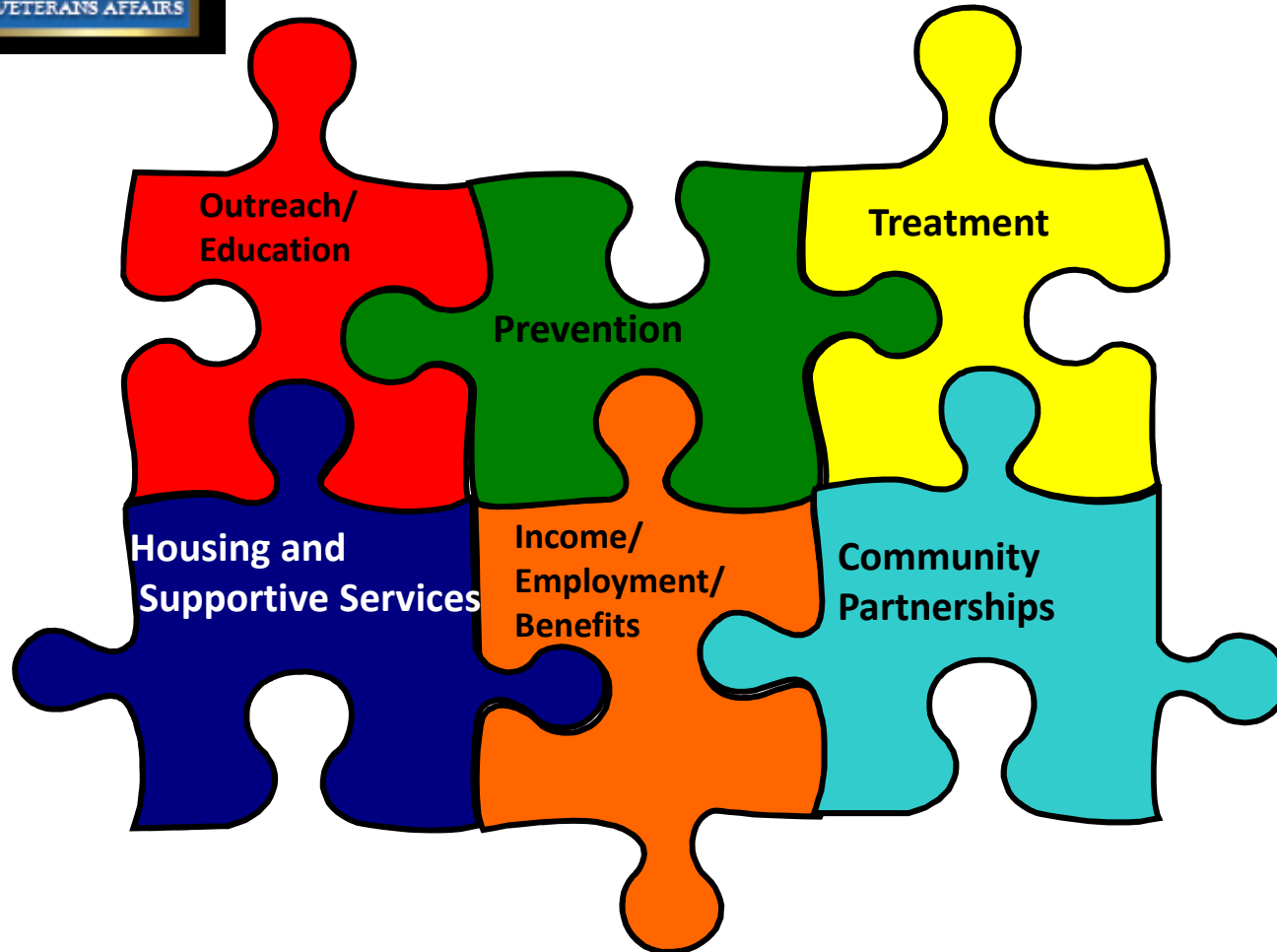


# VA's Strategy to Eliminate Homelessness Among Veterans

- VHA homeless programs were initiated by Public Law 100-6 in 1987
- In November 3, 2009, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki announces a Five Year Plan to End Homelessness Among Veterans
- Key philosophy of “**No Wrong Door**” means that all Veterans seeking to prevent or get out of homelessness must have easy access to programs and services. Any door a Veteran comes to – at a Medical Center, a Regional Office, or a Community Organization – must offer them assistance.



# Six Strategic Pillars to End Homelessness Among Veterans





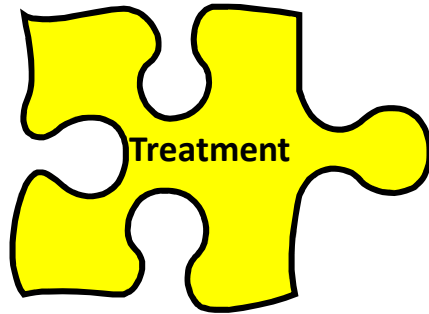
# Homeless Prevention Services

- **Supportive Services for Low-Income Veteran Families**
  - Grants to provide case management and supportive services for low-income Veteran families
  - Services include temporary financial assistance to prevent Veterans falling into homelessness
  - Link to the Final Rule: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-28407.pdf>
- **Health Care for Re-entry Veterans**
  - Outreach to Veterans within 6 months of release from state and federal correctional facilities
  - Coordination with Corrections and Parole on community re-entry plans
  - Connection to VA health care and benefits
- **Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative**
  - Outreach and education for law enforcement
  - Linkage to VA services for Veterans in treatment courts, including Veterans Courts
  - Transitional planning for Veterans discharging from the justice system
  - Designated Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists at each VA medical center



# Outreach & Education

- **National Call and Referral Center**
  - Resource for homeless Veterans and advocates seeking immediate assistance
  - Linkage to wide array of VA and community resources
  - 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838)
- **Health Care for Homeless Veterans**
  - Emergency residential placement (60-180 days) and supportive services for homeless Veterans
  - Contracted services with community providers for Per Diem



# Treatment

- ***Access, Access, Access and the “No Wrong Door Policy”***
- **VA Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Programs**
  - VA-operated residential care programs with access to full spectrum of available services, plus in-house programming;
  - **Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans:** 4 month psychosocial rehabilitation
- **Homeless Veterans Dental Initiative**
  - Enhanced effort to promote dental care for homeless Veterans



# Housing and Supportive Services

- **Grant and Per Diem**

- Transitional housing (up to 24 months) and supportive services for homeless Veterans
- Nationally competitive grant process; awards to community non-profit providers

- **HUD-VASH Program**

- Nation's largest supported permanent housing initiative
- Combines permanent housing with case management and supportive services that promote and maintain recovery and housing stability
- HUD Housing Choice Section 8 rental vouchers paired with VA dedicated case management services





# Income, Employment & Benefits

- **Supportive Employment/Compensated Work Therapy**
  - Employment program targeted at Veterans with significant health problems
  - Each VAMC has hired up to 6 homeless / formerly homeless Veterans to work in VA programs to help other homeless Veterans find competitive employment
- **Expedited Claims for Homeless Veterans**
  - Collaboration with VBA to ensure timely processing of homeless Veterans' benefits claims
- **Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program**
  - Collaboration with Department of Labor grantees to provide Veterans with gainful employment



# Community Partnerships

- **Collaborate with local, City, State, Federal and community partners to:**
  - Conduct effective outreach to homeless and at-risk Veterans
  - Maximize housing, employment and other resources for homeless Veterans

*“We will provide new help for homeless Veterans because those heroes have a home – it’s the country they served, the United States of America. And until we reach a day when not a single Veteran sleeps on the street our business is unfinished.”*

- President Barack Obama



# Accessing VA Services

- Homeless Veteran in need of help now?  
**Call 1-877-4AID VET (1-877-424-3838)**  
*“MAKE THE CALL!”*



- Go to any VA medical center, outpatient clinic, or VBA Regional Office
  - Ask for Homeless Coordinator
  - Ask for OEF/OIF/OND Coordinator
  - Ask for Women Veterans Coordinator
- Use the VA website: [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless)



# Accessing VA Services

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