

# HOMELESS OUTREACH PROJECT SHERIDAN COUNTY, WY

## A New Approach for Sheridan's Homeless

Volunteers of America Northern Rockies (VOA) has been providing services, support and shelter for the homeless since 1989. Caring case management, food, clothing, shelter and a broad array of services have been provided through the Sheridan Community Shelter for over 20 years. In calendar year 2016, the Sheridan Community Shelter served 344 individuals, 12,339 meals and provided 8,124 nights of sleep to the homeless.

Due to challenges of insufficient funding sources, VOA will be transitioning from a residential homeless program to a best practice non-residential service based programming. VOA staff will help find solutions to assist homeless and potentially homeless individuals through rapid rehousing and homeless prevention services in Sheridan County. Beginning immediately, current Shelter residents will be transitioned toward permanent housing and other resources in preparation for the Shelter closing on September 30. Homeless Outreach Program staffing will be established and begin operation September 18, 2017.

## Program Description

The needs of literally homeless people and those at risk of homelessness will continue to be addressed vigorously through a new program design operated by VOA. The Homeless Outreach Program approach will emphasize rapid re-housing, homeless prevention and active community engagement with individuals seeking services. The program will also collaborate with partnering organizations to access resources that contribute to client stability and successful transitioning from homelessness. These methods are considered "best practices" by human service agencies and homeless support organizations.

The Homeless Outreach Program and staff will be located in VOA offices beginning on September 18, 2017. Persons seeking services will be referred to VOA from our many partnering agencies, through staff outreach into the community or by client visits to the VOA Homeless Outreach Program services office.

At intake, immediate needs of individuals and their families will be determined. Those who are literally homeless may be placed in temporary motel accommodations as funding allows. Any emergency needs for healthcare, treatment services or mental health issues will be addressed through prompt referrals. For individuals stranded in Sheridan, assistance may be provided to meet transportation needs. Those individuals unable or unwilling to invest themselves in a housing stabilization plan will be provided with basic essentials for homeless living.

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Case management for individuals in need will be a critical process implemented by VOA staff. During their stay in temporary accommodations, VOA staff will initiate person-centered case plans with willing individuals who seek to progress from their current situations with emphasis on housing placements. Persons served may be seeking affordable housing as a first step to stabilization and VOA will bring housing location resources to bear in achieving this goal. Staff will help complete applications for assistance including Low Income Energy Assistance (LIEAP), SSI Outreach and Recovery (SOAR), and employment applications. Staff will further assist with access to food stamps (SNAP), creating resumes and locating additional resources.

Other individuals may encounter difficult, sudden economic circumstances that place them in jeopardy of losing their current housing situation. Direct assistance may be provided to this population through grant sources such as Emergency Shelter Grant which targets short-term, one time infusions of support for a portion of rent, utilities or other necessary living requirements, as quickly as possible. Swift action to determine eligibility and render assistance is critical in avoiding the more complex levels of service that may be necessary should these people become literally homeless.

Rehousing homeless individuals rapidly or avoiding the setbacks through loss of current housing requires a rapid response to these circumstances that will enable individuals to recover, stabilize and move onto other opportunities in their path to independence.

## Linkages and Networking

Collaboration will be critical to meet the needs of the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless. State and local social service agencies, non-profit organizations, healthcare providers, faith communities, the general public, and local law enforcement agencies will all need to be involved.

The Wyoming Homeless Collaborative/Coordinated Entry program is an important tool that will be utilized to prioritize those in need and help connect them with services across the state of Wyoming. VOA has and will continue to cultivate the vital relationships with partner agencies, philanthropic organizations and the community as a whole to collectively address the needs of homeless veterans, women, men and families.

As soon as a homeless individual or family is contacted at intake, service delivery or referral begins. Length of stay at motel facilities will vary and will depend upon client plans for permanent housing, weather conditions and the availability of funding. The preliminary budget is restrictive to a limited amount of motel rooms at this time. VOA staff will work with individuals to locate appropriate permanent housing in a timely and efficient manner or to help them relocate to their home communities. This will be a fast paced program with swift and effective services provided to speed stabilization for homeless individuals.

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VOA has built a strong network for locating permanent housing resources in the community. It is anticipated that these relationships will be an important component in facilitating rapid rehousing placements for those in need.

VOA welcomes inquiries about the new program and looks forward to continuing successful homeless services with the support of the Sheridan community.

## Examples

All examples are based on the individual's willingness to participate in a person-centered plan for permanent housing. Those individuals not willing to participate may be provided with some food items, personal hygiene items and a sleeping bag.

## Emergency Shelter

Two nights of motel accommodations may be made available to individuals who are literally homeless. Additional nights may be made available for those willing to engage and demonstrate progress in a person-centered plan to pursue permanent housing. These individuals will move from Emergency Shelter to Rapid Re-Housing. The nights of motel accommodations will be limited and based on funding availability. Individual contribution will be encouraged and expected as ability allows.

## Rapid Re-Housing

VOA employees have established relationships with property managers and low-income housing managers to expedite housing options. Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) will be made available for security deposits and/or rent on a tiered system as funding allows. For example:

Month 1	75% TFA
Month 2	50% TFA
Month 3	25% TFA

## Homeless Prevention

Individuals or families who are under imminent threat of eviction may be provided TFA to prevent homelessness. The TFA will be made available for items such as utilities, rent and groceries. The TFA will be made available in conjunction with case management goals and objectives to create housing sustainability.

## Veterans

Eligible Veterans will be referred to Supported Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) for housing stabilization including Freedom Hall.

Non-eligible Veterans may be provided emergency housing for a limited amount of time and referred to the VA for additional services.

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## Transportation to Home Communities

Case management will focus on identifying home and family communities. Transportation arrangements and payments may be made to help individuals return to home communities. This will allow the individuals access to resources and knowledge that can assist them in gaining housing stabilization.

## Unaccompanied Youth

Will be served under the auspices of the Independent Living Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Richins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Todd Richins  
Division Director  
trichins@voanr.org  
307.672.0475 (o)  
[www.voanr.org](http://www.voanr.org)