

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION
DOMINION COMMAND
LEAVE THE STREETS BEHIND
HOMELESS VETERANS PROGRAM GUIDELINES
FOR PROVINCIAL COMMANDS AND LEGION BRANCHES

The following guidelines are to assist Provincial Commands and Legion Branches to establish a Homeless Veterans program in their respective areas. They are not steadfast or mandatory but are meant to provide assistance to establishing a Homeless Veterans program.

Veterans Services and Seniors/Homeless Veterans Committee

Since the beginning of the program there has been no stipulation to the makeup of the VSS or Homeless Veterans Committee(s). Is the Homeless Veterans Committee part of the VSS Committee or is it a separate identity? The decision is that of Provincial Commands, but there must be consistency throughout the Districts, Zones and Branches as they will continue to implement the program.

DEFINITIONS

Understanding the types of Homelessness is a must and can determine how each case will be handled.

Absolute Homelessness

Absolute Homelessness is defined where an individual or family has no permanent housing and is staying in temporary shelter. The temporary shelter could be doorways, empty buildings, abandoned vehicles, parks or bench common areas.

Near Homelessness

An individual or family are on the brink of losing their present living quarters, due to lack of payment of rent, heat and hydro, etc.

At Risk Homeless

An individual who is dependent on others for housing, who is couch surfing, and whose personal or economic situation has changed.

NOTE

Keep in mind that Female Veterans have been identified in the Homeless Veterans program.

GETTING STARTED

Appoint a Committee Chairman and establish a committee. Develop Terms of Reference for the committee and determine who will be responsible for the various aspects of the program.

Keeping statistics is extremely helpful as they will give credibility to future reports and updates to various organizations, VAC and other government agencies, and itemize the assistance provided.

Identify and create partnerships with various Missions and Shelters, Police, EMS, VAC and create a referral to where these associations can make contact with the VSS Committee or Command office to engage in a solution or assistance for the Homeless Veteran.

Develop literature for the program and distribute to various partners.

It is essential that VAC be a partner in your program. Once you have received documentation, provide the local VAC office with a copy and ensure the Veteran becomes a client and they look after any paperwork for benefits to which they may be eligible to receive. Have a meeting with the local offices or the Command can meet with the Regional Director General to ensure VAC is on board with the program.

FUNDING

Dominion Command approved the use of Poppy Funds in 2010, thus eliminating the necessity for Provincial Commands or Branches to use funds from the General Account to support the Homeless Program. Branches can donate to a Homeless Veterans Fund created at the Command level and these funds can be used to support the program and pay necessary expenses for meetings and support being given to the Veterans. Reference Poppy Manual, page 23, Section 402 (v) iii.

Many Branches have noted there are no Homeless Veterans in their communities; this does not mean that they cannot donate to the Provincial Command Homeless Veterans Fund to support the program. Many Branches have excess funds in their Poppy accounts and this is an ideal way to use them, when it is least expected a Veteran could find themselves in a bad situation. Commands can also donate to the Dominion Command National Foundation, whereby funds could be used to assist other Commands who are short on funding for this program.

PAPERWORK

It is essential to create a document that identifies the Veteran when they apply for assistance. Attached is a simple one-page document that will provide his/her name, contact information for the Shelter and their Case Workers name. Please put the document on your respective Command letterhead. Also noted and the most important is the Service Number, we cannot emphasize the necessity for this information. Before any assistance is provided it is **mandatory** to verify the Service of the Veteran, this can be done through VAC. This verification is necessary, as there are many people coming forward claiming they are Veterans and seeking assistance through the

Homeless program. Completing this form will also allow for a paper trail and will avoid duplication. In the past, we have found that people have attempted to use the Homeless fund for travel across Canada indicating they are Homeless and asking Branches for funds for travel, noting they have to get to another city or town to visit a sick family member. A paper trail will avoid such duplication.

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE

Once verification is complete, the need of the Veteran should be first and foremost. What are the immediate needs? Gift cards purchased locally can provide food, clothing etc.

Never give cash or a cheque to an applicant! Commands and Branches can purchase gift cards, for example from Tim Hortons, McDonald's, Walmart or local grocery stores. In doing so, the Veteran is limited to what he/she can purchase with the card and this eliminates alcohol etc.

Providing assistance for new accommodation, in the manner of first and last month's rent, caution must be taken to ensure that the Veteran can sustain the costs of the apartment. Before committing to any funds request a copy of the Lease Agreement and a financial update from the Veteran to ensure they can afford the unit. **Make cheques payable to the Landlord and send directly to them, and DO NOT put the Veterans name on the cheque.**

If possible, provide an apartment kit or something to welcome the Veteran to their new home. A set of dinnerware, cutlery, coffee mugs cups and saucers, drinking glasses, dish soap, dish clothes, and the list goes on. See list below. Back Packs can also be used to encourage Homeless Veterans to seek the assistance they require to Leave the Streets Behind. See the list below. These backpacks can be given to VAC to assist in encouraging the more cautious Veterans to come forward.

Community Assistance

Once you let the community know that the Homeless Veterans program exists, they will come forward with assistance and will make inquiries as to what is needed. You may be over whelmed by the assistance that various community groups and organizations will bring forward. Be sure to let the community know what the Legion is doing to support the program and assistance being given to the Homeless Veterans in your area.

As previously noted the information provided is a Guide only, and from this Legion Commands and Branches can develop their own Homeless Veterans program.

If you have questions or require clarification and further information, please contact Comrade Ray McInnis, Secretary, VSS Committee, Dominion Command, rmcinnis@legion.ca.

Apartment Kit

Salt/pepper, Shower curtain + rings, 8 piece bed in a bag, Pillows, Afghan, Tide, Pot/pan set, Garbage & compost bags, Plastic container set, Spatula, large spoon, flipper set(5 pieces), Cutlery set, Dishes, coffee mugs, Drinking glasses, Dish towels, Wash cloths, Dish soap, all-purpose cleaner and wipes, Alarm clock, Paring knife, Carrot/veggie peeler, Tongs, Toilet paper, Paper towel, Bath towel set, Electric kettle, Toaster, Hangers, Coffee/hot chocolate packs, Instant oatmeal

Comfort Bag (Backpack)

Ground matt, 2 in 1 shampoo, Sun screen, Deodorant, Tooth brush/paste, Floss, Bar of soap and holder, Wash cloth, Nail cutter set, Passport pouch, Chap stick, Hand/foot warmers, 2 pairs of socks, T- shirt, Candies, Instant oatmeal, Coffee/hot chocolate, Small chocolate bar, Can of nuts, Winter socks, First aid kit, Hat/mitt/scarf, Baseball hat, Pen & paper, Hand wipes, Combs/hair brush, Hand cream