Thanks for volunteering! This guide will assist you to:

* Know where to come and when to be there
* How to prepare yourself
* What to expect
* Learn more about homeless veterans in your community and in general

# YOUR ROLE AS A VOLUNTEER

**Volunteering shifts:** You will have signed up for a certain day and time to volunteer for this event. Volunteering shifts are as follows (unless arranged otherwise):

* Date(s) Time(s)

Some of you have signed up for several shifts and some have signed up as a group for a slightly different time slot. In case you are in doubt about the time you have signed up for, please contact [NAME AND EMAIL/PHONE]

**Location:** The address of the Stand Down is [NAME ADDRESS].

For ALL volunteers, please come to the registration table in front of the building to get registered upon arrival. You will be given a name tag, evaluation form and a thank you certificate for volunteering.

**Assignments**: There are various different jobs and assignments during the event. You will be given your assignment to a specific job when registering. We will have lead volunteers present at each station/service who will be in charge of instructing and guiding the activities and who should be contacted in case there is a question or an issue during the Stand Down.

**What to prepare:** If possible, please wear a red shirt or sweater. If you are volunteering as an organization, you may wear your organizational t-shirt or attire. Volunteers will be given name tags but we would appreciate if all volunteers could be dressed in red.

**Parking:** Parking is available at [LOCATION].

# VOLUNTEER BEHAVIOR

Please:

* Wear a smile, be courteous and friendly and introduce yourself to participants.
* Be available to assist wherever you can. This is a team effort.
* Be proactive and engaged.
* Use this opportunity as a way to learn from and about our homeless veterans and their families.

Please refrain from:

* Using your cell phone except in case of emergency.
* Vanishing without letting anybody know.
* Taking any of the donations meant for participants without express permission by the organizers.
* Overindulging in refreshments or getting in line for refreshments before participants have been served.

Breakfast, lunch, and refreshments will be available.

# AFTER THE STAND DOWN

Everything that is left over from the **Stand Down** will continue to help OUR community:

* Food will be donated to [ORGANIZATION].
* Clothing and toys will be donated to [ORGANIZATION].
* Bus passes, phone cards, and other items will be given to [ORGANIZATION].
* Any money that is not used for Stand Down will be given to [ORGANIZATION] to help veterans and families in need.

# IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

For any questions or concerns, please send an email to [NAME AND EMAIL].

# DID YOU KNOW?

About 1.5 million other veterans are considered at risk of homelessness due to poverty, lack of support networks, and dismal living conditions in overcrowded or substandard housing.

Only 8% of the population can claim veteran status but over 20% of the homeless population are veterans.

The risk of women veterans becoming homeless is four times greater than for male veterans.

**What services do veterans need?** Veterans need a coordinated effort that provides secure housing, nutritional meals, basic physical health care, substance abuse care and aftercare, mental health counseling, personal development and empowerment. Additionally, veterans need job assessment, training and placement assistance.

**What seems to work best?** The most effective programs for homeless and at-risk veterans are community-based, nonprofit, “veterans helping veterans” groups. Programs that seem to work best feature transitional housing with the camaraderie of living in structured, substance-free environments with fellow veterans who are succeeding at bettering themselves.

Government money, while important, is currently limited, and available services are often at capacity. It is critical, therefore, that community groups reach out to help provide the support, resources and opportunities most Americans take for granted: housing, employment and health care. Veterans who participate in collaborative programs are afforded more services and have higher chances of becoming tax-paying, productive citizens again.

# WHAT CAN I DO?

* **Determine the need in your community.** Visit with homeless veteran providers. Contact your mayor’s office for a list of providers, or search the [**NCHV database**](http://nchv.org/network.cfm).
* **Involve others.** If you are not already part of an organization, align yourself with a few other people who are interested in attacking this issue.
* **Participate in local homeless coalitions.** Chances are, there is one in your community. If not, this could be the time to bring people together around this critical need.
* **Make a donation** to your local homeless veteran provider.
* **Contact your elected officials.** Discuss what is being done in your community for homeless veterans (National Center for Homeless Veterans, [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org)).

# THE FACTS

**What is a Stand Down?**

During the Vietnam War, a Stand Down was a time away from the battlefield whereby soldiers could rest from combat and take care of personal hygiene, enjoy warm meals, receive medical and dental care, and enjoy the camaraderie of battle buddies in a safe environment.

Today a Stand Down refers to a community based intervention to help homeless veterans “combat” life on the streets and time away from being homeless (even if for one day of support and compassion).

**Why do we need a Stand Down?**

* The numbers of homeless veterans are increasing at alarming rates!
* There are vets with emotional and substance problems that don’t know how or where to find help.
* There are transient veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder that are not being treated or cared for.
* To raise awareness about the needs of our veterans in the community.
* To show our veterans and their families that we support them.

Homelessness in the veteran population:

* 23% of the homeless population are veterans – that is one in four homeless are veterans.
* 67% of homeless veterans served three or more years.
* Nationwide there are approximately 138,000 homeless veterans (based on self-report).
* Homelessness among veterans has increased over the past 18 months with predictions of higher increases.
* Approximately 1 in 10 homeless veterans are women.