

VA Secretary Announces New Hotline for Homeless Veterans

Responders at 1-877-4AID VET Help Veterans Find Food, Shelter and Assistance

CANANDAIGUA , N.Y. (June 3, 2010) – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today the establishment of a new telephone hotline to provide emergency support and resources to homeless Veterans. He made the announcement as he toured the facility at the VA medical center in Canandaigua.

“It is unacceptable for a single Veteran to spend the night on the streets of America ,” said Shinseki. “The hotline of the new National Call Center for Homeless Veterans will provide homeless Veterans with caring, timely assistance and coordinated access to VA and community services.”

Family members, workers at community agencies and non-VA providers also may call the hotline at 1-877-4AID VET to find out about the many programs and services available to assist homeless Veterans.

Well-trained expert responders will staff the hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They will join other responders who staff VA’s Suicide Prevention Hotline at Canandaigua.

Responders are cross trained to handle calls at either call center. While a responder will know which type of call is incoming, all Veteran callers will be receive a brief suicide screening.

VA officials recognize that homeless Veterans are in need of food and shelter, clothing, financial assistance, and treatment for medical conditions. Additionally, many require access to permanent housing, Veterans benefits and vocational resources.

VA assistance is available for homeless Veterans who may have mental health issues, substance abuse, depression, traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress

disorder. The responders operating the new hotline will ensure Veterans receive the help they need and deserve.

The hotline, which began service on March 1, has received 1,846 calls. Call volume is expected to grow as awareness of the service increases.

The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans is the latest in a series of initiatives to help homeless Veterans. Last year, Shinseki launched a campaign to eliminate homelessness among Veterans within five years. Since then, the number of Veterans homeless on a typical night has dropped 18 percent.

“This reduction was achieved through VA’s commitment to end homelessness among Veterans through enhanced collaboration with other federal, state, faith-based, Veteran service organizations and community partners,” Shinseki said.

VA has approximately 4,000 agreements with community partners to help homeless Veterans. Last year, more than 92,000 homeless Veterans were served by VA’s specialized homeless programs. This is an increase of 15 percent from the previous year.