

Help us End Veteran Homelessness in Boston by Renting to a Veteran

Right now there are 60 veterans who have experienced homelessness in Boston, have a VASH voucher, and are looking for an apartment to rent.

How can you help?

If you have an apartment you want to rent to a veteran you can register your unit online at www.homesforthebrave.boston.gov

If you have questions about renting to homeless veterans, contact Ian Gendreau at 617.542.0338, ext. 273 or at gendreau@homestart.org

What is a VASH voucher?

A VASH voucher is a Housing Choice Section 8 voucher for homeless veterans. VASH stands for Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. The VASH program is a partnership between a local Public Housing Authority (in this case the Boston Housing Authority) and the local Veterans Affairs Medical Center (Boston VA).

Eligible Veterans receive a mobile Section 8 voucher through the Boston Housing Authority (BHA). The Boston VA provides ongoing case management and supportive services to the Veteran **and** acts as a liaison to the Landlord/Property Manager. Every homeless veteran who is part of the VASH program must agree to participate in case management services.

How does a VASH voucher work and how long does it last?

A VASH voucher works just like a Section 8 voucher. Once a veteran is issued a voucher, they look for a rental unit. When a landlord agrees to rent to the veteran, the landlord submits a Request for Tenancy Approval (RAFTA) to the BHA. Then the BHA schedules an inspection, determines the rent, and if all goes well, enters into a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract with the landlord. The term of the VASH voucher is indefinite as long as the tenant abides by the lease and remains income eligible.

How long does the process take?

Once the RAFTA has been submitted an inspection can be scheduled within a couple of days and a HAP contract can be signed within 2 weeks. The BHA also has a pre-inspection program that will inspect units before a veteran has been identified.

What is the rent for the unit and how do I get paid?

The rent for the unit must be approved by the BHA as reasonable. The BHA will compare the rent requested with other comparable, unassisted unit rents and determine how much of the rent will be paid by the tenant and by the Housing Authority. The tenant may pay 30%-40% of their income toward rent and utilities. The BHA's portion is calculated using the payment standard as set by the Housing Authority. The payment standards cannot exceed 110% of the Fair Market Rents as set annually by HUD. The total rent cannot exceed the subsidy amount plus 40% of the tenant's income. The tenant will pay their portion of the rent directly to the owner as will the BHA.

What about first/last month's rent and security deposit?

The BHA will pay their portion of the first and last month's rent and the tenant is responsible for the security deposit. If a veteran can't afford the security deposit, funds for this purpose are available and administered by HomeStart. HomeStart is a non-profit agency that provides housing search services to homeless people including veterans with a VASH voucher. HomeStart and the VA work closely together to make sure that every Veteran looking for an apartment can access funds for security deposits. Funds are available for utility deposits as well.

What if I use a real estate broker to rent my apartment?

Funds for broker's fees are available and can be accessed through the agency that is working with the veteran.

Will the veterans have problems with rental history, credit or CORI's?

Keep in mind that this is a program for homeless veterans and some have become homeless recently while others have been homeless for longer periods of time. Some will have an uneven rental history, others will not. It is not uncommon for there to be credit or CORI issues but some applicants will have none of these issues. It's up to you to make the decision about who you want as a tenant but please remember that there is a team of people working with the each and every veteran to keep them in housing.

What type of services do veterans in the VASH program receive?

Each VASH participant has a case manager and a team of people to provide additional support. The team includes Peer Support Specialists, Nurses, Mental Health and Substance Use Clinicians, and Occupational Therapists. The number of home visits and level of support is more when the veteran first moves in and becomes less intensive over time as the tenant adjusts to his/her apartment.

What do I do if there is a problem?

The Boston VA has a Landlord Hotline you can call to talk to local VA staff about the problem (857.364.4444). In addition, if the veteran is willing to sign a release of information, you can call his/her case manager.

Resources:

Register your unit at: <http://homesforthebrave.boston.gov/>

For questions about renting your unit contact Ian Gendreau at 617.542.0338 x273 or gendreau@homestart.org OR email Becky Faherty, VA Housing Specialist at Rebecca.Faherty@va.gov

If you have questions for the BHA, contact Barbara Sheerin at Barbara.Sheerin@bostonhousing.org
Boston VA Landlord Hotline: 857.364.4444