



#### b. Supported Employment Services

The Employment Specialist works with employers and job centers across the service area to develop and promote employment opportunities appropriate for the persons served. The Employment Specialist coordinates and promotes in-house job fairs to assist participants in connecting with employers with job openings ready to hire.

The Employment Specialist also provides direct services such as resume building and job counseling to a small case load of 6 households (2 per office location) needing additional assistance with obtaining employment. Case Managers may refer households to the Employment Specialist to receive these services, pending approval from the Project Coordinator.

The Employment Specialist also distributes a weekly employment newsletter via email with current openings that is sent to a wide list of past and current program participants.

#### c. Legal and Benefits Assistance

The Legal/Benefits Specialist assists participants in addressing ongoing legal actions that impact housing stability and provides assistance when there is difficulty connecting with mainstream and Veteran benefits, including:

- Connecting Veteran households to lawyers that are able to represent them in the claims process, including initial submission for benefits, challenging a denial, requests for a service connection increase, and discharge upgrades
- Representing participants in Washington DC civil court cases
- Providing legal advice
- Flagging Veterans as homeless in the Veterans Benefits Administration system to accelerate case reviews,
- Assisting with accelerated SSI/SSDI applications through the SOAR process
- Meeting monthly with each case manager to review the benefit and legal needs of their case load

#### d. Housing Search and Location

Veterans First employs a Housing Specialist to support the case managers and the participants in the housing search process. The Housing Specialist:

- Develops relationships with local landlords to identify available housing opportunities in all counties served
- Posts weekly ads to online services (i.e.- Craigslist) soliciting landlords
- Maintains Landlord/Housing Google Document, shared with case managers, to ensure housing availability and landlord contact information is up-to-date and accurate



- Provides one-on-one assistance to a small group of Veteran households with higher barriers or other needs as referred by case managers
- Regularly attend landlord workgroup and other housing specialist meetings

Case managers are also responsible for assisting Veteran households in the housing location process, including:

- Assisting participants in locating affordable housing opportunities in the area of their choice utilizing the Veterans First Landlord/Housing Google Doc, online and print advertisements such as Padmapper.com or CraigsList, and cold calls to landlords and leasing offices to determine availability
- Advocating alongside participants to address with landlords and property managers any barriers to entering permanent housing
- Providing mediation assistance to households facing eviction planning to stay in their current unit to address concerns parties may have about maintaining the arrangement
- Helping participants with the transition into permanent housing, including assistance with understanding lease requirements, establishing utility accounts, adequate maintenance of the property, and other supportive services and skills needed to maintain housing stability
- Assisting participants in applying for any subsidized housing or vouchers they may be eligible for in their community

#### e. Landlord Supports

The Veterans First program has a responsibility to and a vested interest in supporting the landlords that provide housing to program participants.

Case Managers ensure that landlords have their contact information in case of developing issues with participants' housing and respond in a timely manner (within 1 business day) to all landlord contacts.

Case Managers may be required to mediate disputes between landlords and tenants as concerns arise and work collaboratively to develop mutually agreeable plans to sustain tenancy. The Housing Specialist may serve as a resource for case managers to support these conversations.

Open and clear communication between Veterans First staff and landlords, including setting realistic standards and expectations for the services provided, are essential to effective landlord support.