

# VA Rideshare program offers homeless Veterans a lift

Veterans enrolled in VHA's Homeless Program may be eligible for transportation assistance getting to and from their place of employment, healthcare and home following their discharge from care.

It's a new Rideshare program.

Rideshare provides expanded transportation to eligible Veterans through a collaborative that uses Uber or Lyft transportation. Rideshare increases employment opportunities, improves access to housing resources and health care, and provides transportation to Veterans being discharged.

*Referrals are required and transportation is coordinated on behalf of the Veteran by their VA provider*

"Our country's most sacred obligation is to prepare and equip the troops we send into harm's way and then to care for them and their families when they come home," VA Secretary Denis McDonough said during a speech at the annual National Coalition of Homeless Veterans conference. "Veterans homelessness is our nation's single greatest point of failure in fulfilling that sacred obligation."

*What homeless Veterans or those at risk of homelessness should do*

Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness can contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.

If Veterans do not have access to a phone or the internet, they should visit their closest [VA medical center](#). A VHA Homeless Program coordinator will work with Veterans to assess all available resources to support each Veteran, including Rideshare. There is a coordinator at all VA medical centers.

Readers who know of homeless or at risk of homeless Veterans can help by getting this information to them.

*Employment Coordinator: "I observed the barriers Veterans face"*

Rideshare aims to provide a hand up to our most vulnerable at risk of and homeless Veterans. It creates greater access to more than health care.

The idea stemmed from VA New England Center of Innovation (NECIE), Innovation Specialist Charles Franklin, an Army Veteran and former Employment Coordinator for

the Boston Healthcare System. Franklin is spearheading the national deployment of Rideshare and anticipates full deployment by Aug. 1, 2021, at all VA medical centers.

“As a former Community Employment Coordinator, I observed the barriers Veterans faced when it came to keeping appointments and securing housing,” Franklin said. “I knew additional dedicated resources for transportation would help.”

*Innovation Center – public-private partnership to transform care for Veterans*

Newly developed, the New England Center of Innovation is the first-of-its-kind Veteran Integrated System Network Center for VA. It is led by the VA New England Healthcare System.

Its virtual home and educational hub is the VA Manchester Healthcare System.

Ryan Lilly, NECIE and VA New England Healthcare System director, spoke to the center’s work and impact.

“Our Center for Innovation Excellence quickly proved its value since being established in November of 2020,” Lilly said. “The Rideshare program is specifically meaningful. It was envisioned by an employee Veteran to provide care to his fellow Veterans. The tagline, *Showing ICARE with Rideshare*, will reinforce to Veterans experiencing homelessness across the nation that they are not alone and their health care partners at VA are elevating ideas, products and services to address the challenges they are facing.”