

VA FISHER HOUSES AND OTHER TEMPORARY LODGING

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive provides policy and guidance for the provision of temporary lodging at VA Fisher Houses and other facilities.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CHANGES:** Revisions of definitions and scope of Directive to conform with regulatory changes in Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations part 60.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES:** VHA Handbook 1110.1.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Office of Care Management and Social Work Services (10P4C) is responsible for the content of this Directive. Questions may be addressed to 202-461-6780.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** VHA Directive 2003-009, dated February 7, 2003, is rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of February 2019.

Robert A. Petzel, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

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VA FISHER HOUSES AND OTHER TEMPORARY LODGING

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive provides policy and guidance for the provision of accommodations at VA Fisher Houses and other temporary lodging. **AUTHORITY:** Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1708; title 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 60.

2. BACKGROUND:

a. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized under 38 U.S.C. 1708 to furnish temporary lodging in a Fisher House or other appropriate facility to certain individuals in connection with the examination or treatment of a Veteran.

b. Temporary lodging is granted on a space-available basis, with some consideration given to the compatibility of the applicant(s) and the room(s) available. For example, although VA may require an applicant to share a room with another Veteran or active duty Servicemember's accompanying individual, VA would not do so if the persons affected are not the same gender. *NOTE: VA does not impose a general limit on the number of persons who may accompany a Veteran or active duty Servicemember, but VA may, in specific cases, provide lodging to only a specific number of persons due to space or resource limitations.*

c. All costs associated with temporary lodging are borne by VA and not the Veteran, active duty Servicemember, or accompanying individual.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that while a Veteran or active duty Servicemember is undergoing an episode of care, VA may provide temporary lodging at either a VA Fisher House or other temporary lodging facility, as appropriate.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **Medical Facility Directors.** Medical facility Directors are responsible for:

(1) Providing temporary lodging to eligible Veterans and active duty Servicemembers, as well as accompanying individuals, as space and funding allow in accordance with this Directive.

(2) Establishing a local written policy for their temporary lodging programs, and ensuring all facility staff are familiar with the policy. The local facility policy must outline eligibility and other criteria in accordance with this Directive.

(3) Determining whether to utilize unused VA medical facility beds or rooms for temporary lodging. Utilizing unused VA medical facility beds or rooms for temporary lodging must not have a negative impact on the provision of patient care, such as creating a waiting list for inpatient admissions.

(4) Establishing policy and/or processes for provision of emergency care for Veterans, active duty Servicemembers and accompanying individuals staying in temporary lodging on VA grounds.

(5) Ensuring that decisions concerning temporary lodging are made by the person responsible for coordinating the temporary lodging program at the VA facility and that these decisions are based on determinations made by the VHA health care provider of the Veteran or active duty Servicemembers' medical stability, self-care, and ability to stay unattended in an unsupervised setting.

(6) Ensuring that domiciliary beds or other forms of residential treatment or transitional housing (Psychiatric Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Programs, community-based homeless programs, etc.) are not used for temporary lodging. **NOTE:** *Domiciliaries, community-based homeless programs, and transitional housing and/or residential treatment facilities provide housing only as part of comprehensive bio-psychosocial treatment.*

b. **VHA Health Care Providers.** VHA health care providers are responsible for determining the current medical stability of the Veteran or active duty Servicemember, and determining whether the Veteran or active duty Servicemember is capable of self-care at the time of temporary lodging, or has an accompanying individual who can provide care. This determination includes whether the Veteran can be lodged in an unsupervised setting. Determination of medical stability, self-care, and staying in an unsupervised setting are to be documented in the Veteran's medical record in CPRS. In the event that the VHA health care provider is a supervised health professions trainee, the documentation is subject to the provisions of VHA Handbook 1400.01, or VHA handbook 1400.04, Supervision of Associated Health Trainees.

c. **VHA Staff Overseeing Temporary Lodging Programs.** VHA staff overseeing temporary lodging programs must ensure:

(1) Temporary lodging facilities on VA grounds are safe, clean and free from hazards.

(2) Veterans, active duty Servicemembers, and accompanying individuals being lodged are provided an orientation to the lodging facility, including fire and safety information and who to call in an emergency.

(3) Adequate privacy in the temporary lodging facility for men and women.

5. REFERENCES:

a. 38 U.S.C. 1708.

b. 38 CFR part 60.

6. DEFINITIONS:

a. **Accompanying Individual.** An accompanying individual is an individual who accompanies the Veteran or active duty Servicemember to provide familial support or the equivalent of familial support, to a Veteran or active duty Servicemember while the Veteran or active duty Servicemember is experiencing an episode of care. An accompanying individual includes relatives, close friends, or caregivers.

b. **Compensation and Pension Examination.** A Compensation and Pension (C&P) examination is an examination requested by the Veterans Benefits Administration to be conducted at a VA medical facility for the purpose of evaluating Veterans' claims.

c. **Episode of Care.** Episode of care means a course of outpatient treatment, or a period of hospitalization, during which a Veteran or active duty Servicemember receives health care under 38 U.S.C. chapter 17, or 38 U.S.C. 8111 or 8153. Examples of episodes of care include (but are not limited to) the following:

(1) An appointment at a VA medical facility to receive health care or a C&P examination.

(2) Extended outpatient treatment, such as treatment associated with organ transplant, chemotherapy, or radiation.

(3) Hospitalization for a critical injury or illness; where death is imminent; or where a Veteran is unable to make medical decisions for him/herself and the accompanying individual is authorized to make such decisions on the Veteran's behalf.d.

d. **VA Fisher House.** VA Fisher House means a housing facility that is located at or near a VA medical facility and was constructed by and donated to VA by the Fisher House Foundation (formerly the Zachary and Elizabeth M. Fisher Armed Services Foundation), or a facility that is treated as if it were Fisher House lodging under 38 CFR 60.3.

e. **Other Temporary Lodging.** Other temporary lodging includes:

(1) Lodging at a temporary lodging facility, other than a VA Fisher House, located at a VA medical facility (generally referred to as a "hoptel").

(2) A hotel or motel.

(3) Non-utilized beds at a VA medical care facility designated as lodging beds.

(4) Other donated lodging to be used on a temporary basis in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 1708.

TEMPORARY LODGING CRITERIA

a. **Eligibility.** The following individuals are eligible to apply to stay in temporary lodging:

(1) A Veteran or Servicemember experiencing an episode of care as defined in paragraph 6 c.

(a) Veterans or Servicemembers must be determined clinically stable, capable of self-care or accompanied by an individual able to provide such care, and able to stay in an unsupervised setting. VA does not provide nursing or other medical care in temporary lodging facilities.

1. Veterans or active duty Servicemembers with a Category I Behavioral Patient Record Flag (BPRF) in the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) may be considered for temporary lodging. The Temporary Lodging Coordinator should consult with the local Disruptive Behavior Committee (DBC) who assessed the Veteran or active duty Servicemember and request their re-evaluation to determine if temporary lodging accommodations are appropriate.

2. Veterans or active duty Servicemembers with a Suicide Risk Flag in CPRS may be considered for temporary lodging accommodations. The Temporary Lodging Coordinator must consult with the Behavioral Health Team and request re-evaluation to determine if temporary lodging accommodations are appropriate.

(b) A Veteran or Servicemember cannot stay in a VA Fisher House unless there is an immediate need and there is no alternative temporary lodging and their accompanying individual also stays in a VA Fisher House.

(2) An accompanying individual, as defined in paragraph 6.a., of a Veteran or active duty Servicemember.

(a) An accompanying individual cannot stay in temporary lodging that is not a VA Fisher House, unless the Veteran or Servicemember is also lodging in the non-VA Fisher House facility.

(b) Minor children may not be accommodated in temporary lodging facilities on VA grounds, except in free standing temporary lodging facilities and VA Fisher Houses. Minor children must be supervised at all times by an adult accompanying individual.

(3) An applicant for temporary lodging (either a Veteran, Servicemember, or accompanying individual) may not be granted lodging unless they must travel either 50 or more miles or at least 2 hours from their home to the VA medical facility. The VHA facility Director may make an exception to distance or time provisions based on exceptional circumstances, such as condition of the Veteran or active duty Servicemember, inclement weather, road conditions, or the mode of transportation used by the Veteran or active duty Servicemember.

(4) All applicable preceding criteria may be waived for individuals who must be present on site for evaluation, donation, and care related to their status as an organ donor for a Veteran. Accompanying individuals of these donors may also be provided temporary lodging at all phases of the organ transplant process.

b. **Duration of Temporary Lodging and Other Services.**

(1) Temporary lodging may be provided while the Veteran or Servicemember is undergoing an episode of care (see paragraph 6 c., e.g. while the Veteran is hospitalized, or if the Veteran is admitted to a VA medical facility while undergoing an outpatient episode of care for which temporary lodging was already provided), or as extended by the appropriate VA clinician or social worker based on an emergency situation or unforeseen circumstances. Generally:

(a) Temporary lodging may be provided the night before the day of the scheduled care if, the Veteran leaving home after 8:00 a.m. would be unable to arrive at the VA medical facility by the time of the scheduled appointment.

(b) Temporary lodging may be provided the night of the scheduled care, if, after the appointment, the Veteran would be unable to return home before 7:00 p.m.

(2) Temporary lodging may be provided to accompanying individuals for the duration of the episode of care subject to limitations described in this section.

(3) When non-VA temporary lodging facilities are used, VA staff should make arrangements for transportation to and from the VHA facility for those Veterans or active duty Servicemembers without a means of transportation. Transportation may be made using non-VA resources or VA resources, if the Veteran or Servicemember is otherwise eligible for such transportation under 38 U.S.C. 111A. *NOTE: Making travel arrangements does not involve paying for travel or providing travel, except as authorized by 38 U.S.C. 111 or 111A.*

(4) VA medical facilities may provide meals or vouchers for meals in the Veterans Canteen Service for Veterans staying in temporary lodging. Meals for accompanying individuals staying in temporary lodging are to be at the expense of the family member or caregiver, or provided through donated funds in a General Post Fund account.

c. **Application Process for Temporary Lodging.**

(1) To receive temporary lodging, a Veteran, active duty Servicemember, or accompanying individual must complete and submit VA Form 10-0408A, VA Fisher House or Other Temporary Lodging Application. VA Form 10-0408A is available from any VA medical facility or on the VA Forms Web site at: <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/>. The completed application must be submitted as follows:

(a) For VA Fisher House lodging, to the Fisher House Manager at the VA medical facility of jurisdiction.

(b) For other temporary lodging, to the temporary lodging program coordinator at the VA medical facility of jurisdiction.

(2) Applications are generally processed in the order that they are received by VA, and temporary lodging is then granted on a first come, first served basis. However, in extraordinary circumstances, such as imminent death, critical injury, or organ donation, applications may be processed out of order.