

# VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

## VA Fisher House Program

### Fisher House Foundation Community Partner Face to Face Meeting

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National Program Manager

Fisher House and Family Hospitality Program

Care Management, Chaplain and Social Work (10P4C)

# Bottom Line Up Front

Fisher Houses (FH) are constructed by the Fisher House Foundation and gifted to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DOD) to provide temporary accommodations, comfort and support during a period hospitalization for an unexpected illness or injury

VA Fisher House Program promotes the highest level of community engagement at all levels of the organization

The VA Fisher House Program is one of the largest healthcare hospitality programs in the country with 36 houses.

The National Fisher House and Family Hospitality program is responsible for all aspects of the VA Fisher House program and con-clinical temporary lodging

The VA facility is responsible funding and completing FH construction site prep.

The VA facility is responsible for funding FH operations including staffing, maintenance and ongoing refurbishment

Fisher Houses are Federal Buildings



# What is a Fisher House?

A “Home Away From Home” for visiting families and Caregivers of hospitalized Veterans and Active Duty Servicemembers

Foster a healing environment where family members and Caregivers can support one another and actively participate in the treatment of hospitalized Veterans and Active Duty Servicemembers

Constructed on the grounds of VA Health Care Centers and Military Installations

There is no charge to stay in a VA Fisher House

There are no time limits placed on VA Fisher House stays



# VA Fisher House Program Regulatory Authority

**Section 221(a) of the Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-419)** gave VA authority to furnish temporary lodging in Fisher Houses constructed and donated by the Fisher House Foundation to Veterans, families and Caregivers in connection with the Veterans' examination, treatment or care. This provision addresses temporary lodging and VA Fisher House eligibility criteria. This provision has been codified at 38 U.S.C. 1708 and is administered by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

**VHA Directive 1107: VA Fisher Houses and Other Temporary Lodging** provides guidance for the VA Fisher House and Temporary Lodging Programs. The Directive includes criteria for new VA Fisher House site selection and information on the Fisher House application process.

# VA Fisher House Eligibility Criteria

Commute at least 50 miles to the VA Health Care Center

Must be engaged in the hospitalized Veteran or Active Duty Servicemember's treatment; May stay if the Veteran is receiving care in a community hospital coordinated by VA.

Veterans/Active Duty Servicemembers undergoing long-term outpatient treatment may stay at the Fisher House **only** if accompanied by a family member/Caregiver

Must be medically stable and capable of self care

Fisher House is a non-clinical environment

Must have stable housing and not homeless



# National VA Fisher House Program Status

**36** active VA Fisher Houses located at **33** VA Facilities

**25,419** families accommodated in VA Fisher Houses

**36,686** individual guests were accommodated in VA Fisher Houses

**Over 16 million dollars** in lodging costs saved for VA Fisher House Guests

**81%** average VA Fisher House occupancy rate

**7.18 days** average VA Fisher House length of stay

**11,218** volunteers provided **54,051** hours of service to support VA Fisher Houses

*\*FY2017 national program statistics*



# VA Fisher House Program Locations

Albany, NY.

Augusta, GA .

Bay Pines, FL.

Boston, MA.

Charleston, SC.

Chicago, IL.

Cincinnati, OH.

Dallas, TX.

Dayton, OH.

Denver, CO.

Gainesville, FL.

Greater Los Angeles, CA.

Houston, TX. (3 houses)

Las Vegas, NV.

Long Beach, CA.

Miami, FL.

Minneapolis, MN.(2 houses)

Milwaukee, WI.

Murfreesboro, TN.

Orlando, FL.

Palo Alto, CA.

Pittsburgh, PA.

Portland, OR.

Richmond, VA.

Salt Lake City, UT.

San Antonio, TX.

Seattle, WA.

St. Louis, MO.

Tampa, FL.

Tucson, AZ.

Washington, DC.

West Haven, CT.

West Palm Beach, FL.



**FISHER HOUSE**

# VA Fisher Houses: Breaking Ground



VA Maine HCS Groundbreaking



Tampa II Groundbreaking



West Haven Groundbreaking



Orlando Groundbreaking

# VA Fisher House Program Expansion 26 Priority Sites

## **Fisher Houses Under Construction**

Bronx VAMC, NY. (2 houses)

Tampa VAMC (2<sup>nd</sup> house), Tampa, FL.

Palo Alto (2<sup>nd</sup> house), Palo Alto, CA.

Cleveland VAMC, Cleveland, OH. (2 houses)

VA Maine HCS, Togus ME.

## **Fisher House Proffers Accepted**

Hunter Holmes Maguire VA Medical Center  
(2<sup>nd</sup> house), Richmond, VA.

Huntington VA Medical Center, Huntington, WV.

New Mexico HCS, Albuquerque, NM.



Tampa VAMC Fisher House II Construction

# VA Fisher House Program Expansion cont.

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System  
(2nd house), Bay Pines, FL.

Nebraska/Western Iowa HCS, Omaha, NE.

Lexington VAMC, Lexington, KY.

Birmingham VAMC, Birmingham, AL.

Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital,  
Columbia, MO.

South Texas Veterans Healthcare System (second  
house) San Antonio, TX.

Overton Brooks VA Medical Center,  
Shreveport, LA.

Eastern Colorado HCS, Denver, CO.

Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System,  
New Orleans, LA.

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, Ann Arbor, MI.

VA Hudson Valley Health Care System,  
Montrose, NY.

White River Junction VA Medical Center,  
White River Junction, VT.

Perry Point VA Medical Center- VA Maryland  
Health Care System, Perry Point, MD.

William Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center,  
Columbia, SC.

John D. Dingell, VAMC, Detroit, MI.

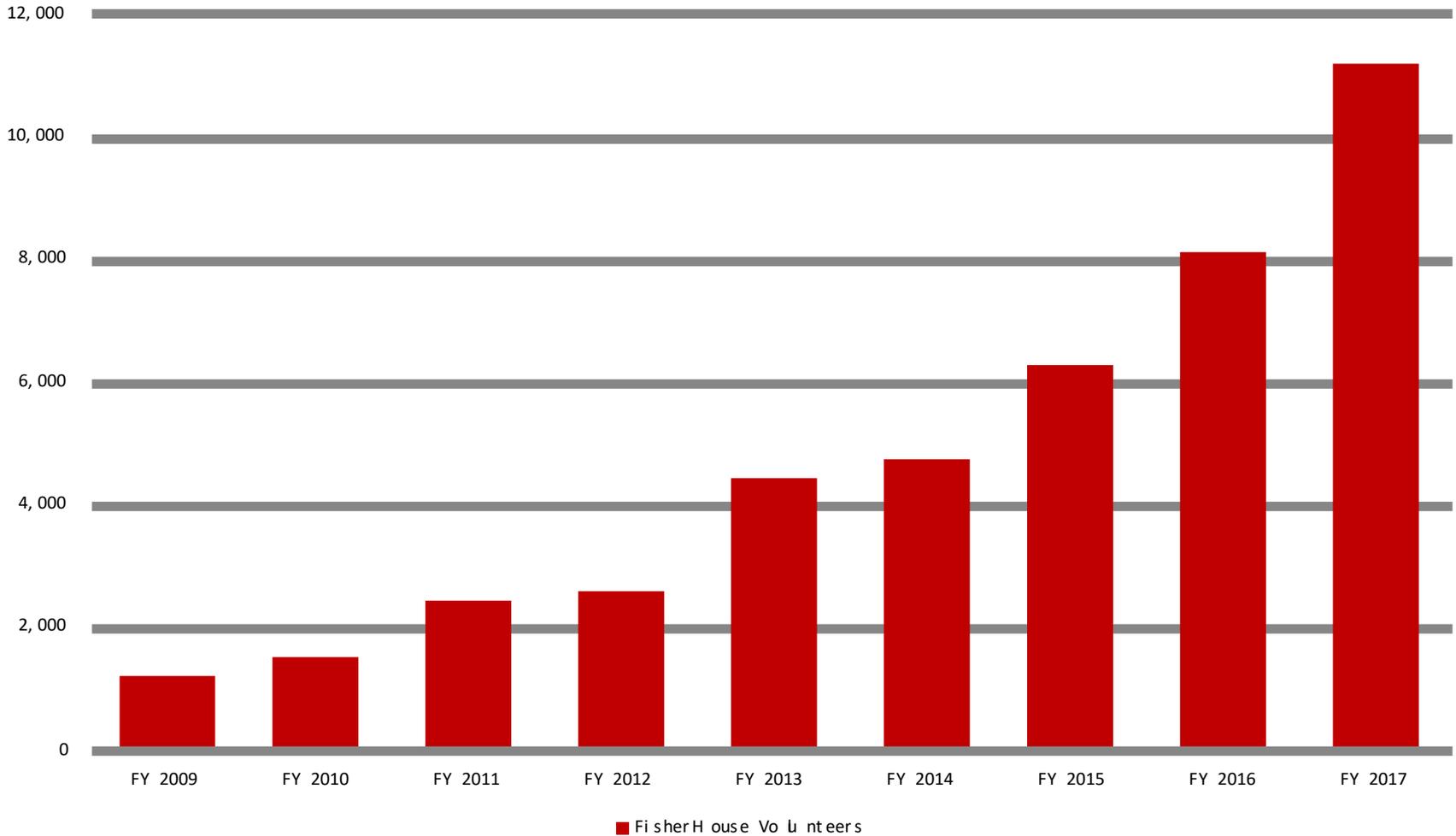
Lovell FHCC, North Chicago, IL.

Kansas City VA Medical Center, Kansas City, MO.

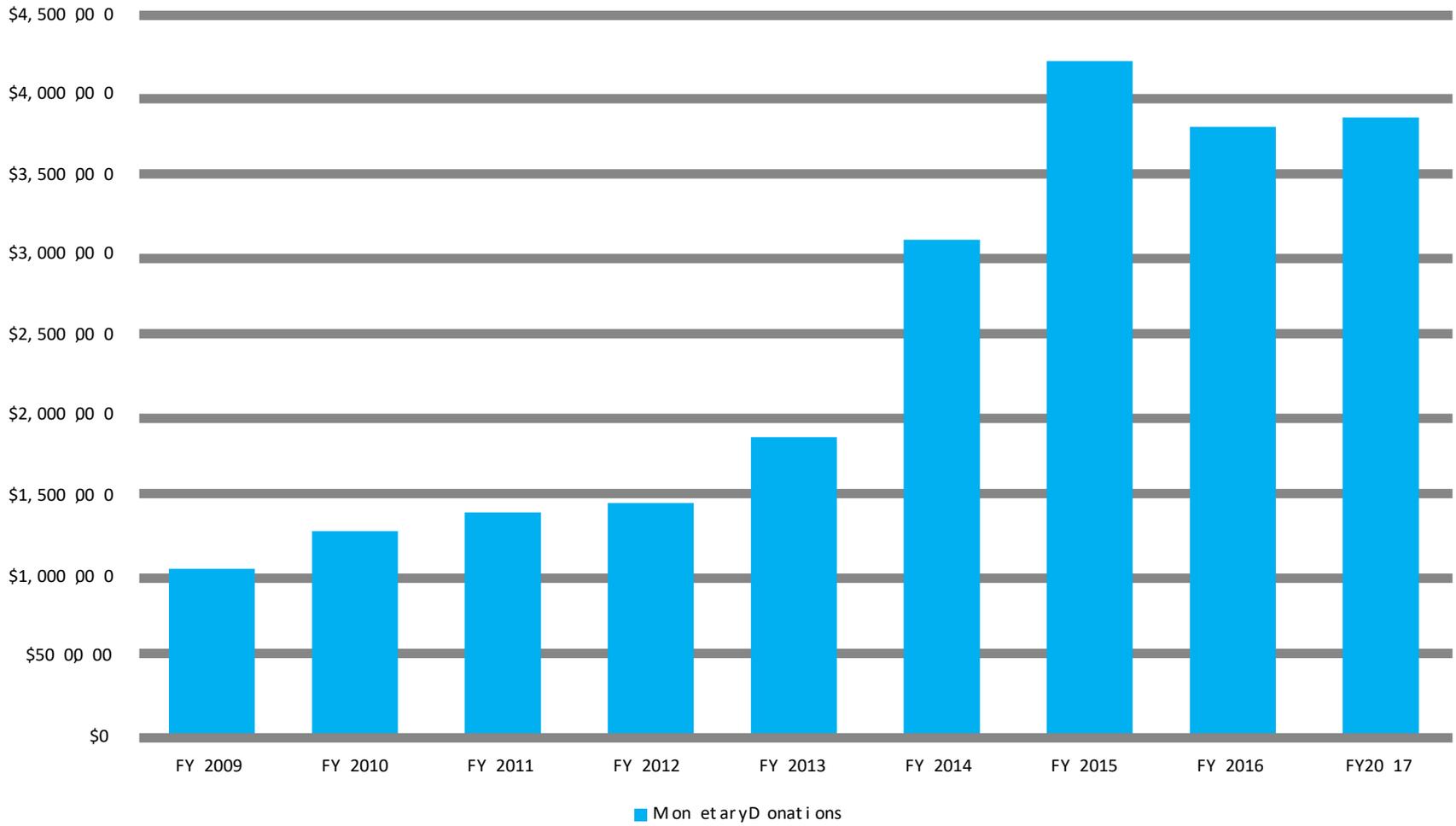
VA Caribbean VCS, San Juan, PR.

land acquisition in process

# Community Support for VA Fisher Houses



# Community Support for VA Fisher Houses



# VA Fisher Houses Supporting Veteran Centered Care

Promote access to care for Veterans/Active Duty Servicemembers traveling long distances to VA medical facilities

Provide a mechanism for family and Caregivers to participate and maintain a consistent presence at the bedside

Decrease the financial burden related to out of town accommodations for those traveling to visit hospitalized loved ones

Improve patient outcomes and reduce inpatient length of stay

- Accommodate Caregivers while they receive training to support transition to home
- Consistent Caregiver/family presence positively impacts patients' ability to cope with illness and hospitalization



# VA Fisher House Construction



West Palm Beach VA Fisher House



South Texas VA Fisher House

# VA Fisher House Construction

Fisher House Foundation (FHF) offers a Proffer to SECVA

The Fisher House is accepted by SECVA as a gift to the Federal Government from FHF

FHF builds the house with their General Contractor. VA issues a revocable license for construction

FH G.C. builds the house and turns it over to VA. It becomes a Federal Building

Facility is responsible for funding all site prep. to support the Fisher House construction

- Land acquisition/due diligence
- Pulling utilities to the site
- Grading/retaining walls when required
- NEPA/NHPA (Section 106 Consultation)
- backup generator (if applicable)
- Installation of all IT: Phones, security cameras, cable and Wi-Fi service, water monitoring system



# Establishing A Facility Fisher House Program

Identify Fisher House Program Alignment within the organization

Establish a Fisher House Steering Committee

Hire a Fisher House Manager and support staff

Educate VA staff and community about Fisher House

Community Engagement and Media

Fisher House TMS Web Course availability for all staff

Maintain Temporary Lodging or Hoptel Program

Develop a local Fisher House policy



# VA Fisher House Operations

Each VA Fisher House must have a full time Manager to oversee the functions of the local Fisher House Program. FH staff are VA employees

VA Medical Facility is responsible for providing appropriate number of staff to support FH operations (i.e. Housekeeping, Program Support, Asst. Manager)

The VA Medical Facility funds day-to-day operation costs, including utilities, appropriate number of staff and general upkeep

VA is committed to maintaining Fisher Houses in pristine condition

VA Facility commits to fund annual refurbishment projects to maintain the houses in the condition they were gifted



# VA Fisher House Program Monthly Report

## VA FISHER HOUSE MONTHLY REPORT

VA Hospital \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_  
Key for Questions on VA Fisher House Monthly Reports

**Reporting Requirements:** The VA Fisher House Monthly Report for the *previous month* must be submitted to the National VA Fisher House and Family Hospitality Program Manager, Care Management & Social Work Services in VA Central Office by the **15<sup>th</sup> of each month**. It is the responsibility of the local Fisher House Manager to verify the accuracy of all information prior to submitting the report to Central Office. Please submit the attached report in word document format.

### Definitions for Components of the Report:

- 1. Occupancy Rate:** Occupancy is expressed as a simple percentage, derived from taking the occupied guest nights divided by guest nights possible. For example, if a house has seven suites available, there would be 210 guest nights possible in a 30-day month. "Occupied" means unavailable for assignment to a guest. **Rooms that cannot be assigned after 4pm because they are not clean are considered occupied.**
- 2. Unoccupied days due to construction, maintenance, or refurbishment:** The number of rooms that cannot be occupied due to construction related issues. For example, if you have one room unable to be used for 3 days and a second room unable to be used for 14 days, you would report 17 days. *Please note: This number days should be subtracted from the total number of available days available when calculating the monthly occupancy rate.*
- 3. Families Accommodated During the Month:** The number of families residing in the house on the first of the month plus the number of families that moved in during the month. This includes families of both Active Duty Servicemembers and Veterans.
- 4. Families of Active Duty Servicemembers Accommodated during the Month:** Of the number of families accommodated that month, the number of families visiting active duty Servicemembers.
- 5. Families of Post 9-11 OIF/OEF/OND Veterans accommodated during the month:** Of the number of guests accommodated that month, please designate the number of families visiting Post 9-11 OIF/OEF/OND Veterans.
- 6. Average Length of Stay of Active Duty Service Members:** The average number of occupied guest nights for active duty family members checking out the month.
- 7. Number of New Families Accommodated:** Of the number of families accommodated that month, the number who moved in after the first of the month.
- 8. Number of New Individual Guests Accommodated During the Month:** Of the number of families accommodated that month, the number individuals who arrived after the first of the month.
- 9. Cumulative Number of Families Accommodated:** The total occupancy in the Fisher House for the fiscal year to date, including those residing in the house during the month being reported. Please add #3 (Families accommodated during the month) to #9 (Cumulative Number of Families Accommodated) of the previous month to achieve this number.
- 10. Number of Families Checking Out:** The number of families who checked out of the Fisher House during the month.

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## VA FISHER HOUSE MONTHLY REPORT

VA Hospital \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_

- 11. Number of lodging nights provided through the Fisher House Hotels for Heroes Program:** Number of nights a families stay in a local hotel under the Fisher House Foundation's Hotel for Heroes program. This would be the total nights the Hotels for Heroes program provided accommodations each month.
- 12. Average Length of Stay:** The average number of occupied guest nights a family stayed for all families checking out that month.
- 13. Families on Waiting List:** The cumulative number of families on a waiting list because The Fisher House is at capacity. Please count the total for the entire month.
- 14. Families Referred for Accommodations:** The number of families the Fisher House Manager referred to a community hotel, motel or other lodging facility because the Fisher House was full. This includes all referrals, whether VA paid for the community lodging or not.
- 15. Monetary Donations Received by VA for the month:** The amount of cash donations received during the month and deposited into the Fisher House General Post Fund (GPF) including donations from all sources (voluntary donations from families accommodated and donations from individuals, community groups, Veterans Service Organizations, etc.).
- 16. Donations Received by the local Fisher House 501c3:** Any VA Fisher Houses that have a local community 501c3 supporting the Fisher House should report donations received by the 501c3 on a monthly basis.
- 17. Cumulative Donations received for the fiscal year:** The amount of donations received by VA and the 501c3 to date for the fiscal year, including the month being reported.
- 18. Volunteer Hours:** The number of hours provided by all Fisher House volunteers during the month.
- 19. Volunteers:** The number of all volunteers contributing hours to Fisher House during the month.
- 20. Number of VCS Canteen Booklets distributed to guests:** Please report the number of complete Canteen Booklets distributed to guests. Please do not report the number of individual vouchers. New families should receive 1 canteen book upon arrival to the Fisher House.
- 21. Number of new minor children accommodated:** Please include all new children for the month under the age of 18.
- 22. Activities/Special Events Held During Month:** Description of open houses; tours by VIPs; parties and celebrations; official ceremonies (dedications or rededications); site visits; visits from members of the Fisher family, the Fisher House Foundation; Congressional Representative visits or the Fisher House Board of Trustees; etc.

# VA Fisher House Program Monthly Report

## VA FISHER HOUSE MONTHLY REPORT

VA Hospital \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_

1. Occupancy rate: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of Unoccupied days due to construction, maintenance, or refurbishment: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Total number of families accommodated during the month: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Families of Active Duty Servicemembers accommodated during the month: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Families of Post 9-11 OIF/OEF/OND Veterans accommodated during the month: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Average Length of stay for families of Active Duty Servicemembers accommodated during the month: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Number of new families accommodated this month: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Number of new individual guests accommodated during the month: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Cumulative number of families accommodated: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Number of families checking out: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Number of lodging nights provided through Fisher House Hotels for Heroes Program: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Average length of stay: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Total number of families on waiting list during the month: \_\_\_\_\_
14. Families referred for accommodations in the community during the month: \_\_\_\_\_
15. Monetary donations received by VA this month: \_\_\_\_\_
16. Monetary Donations received by the local 501c3 this month: \_\_\_\_\_
17. Total fiscal year donations: \_\_\_\_\_
18. Number of hours volunteered: \_\_\_\_\_
19. Total Number of volunteers: \_\_\_\_\_
20. Number of VCS Canteen Booklets distributed to guests: \_\_\_\_\_
21. Number of new minor children accommodated this month: \_\_\_\_\_
22. Describe activities/special events held during the month: \_\_\_\_\_

# General Post Funds

**All VA Fisher Houses are required to establish a Fisher House GPF for the purpose of accepting donations for the local Fisher House. GPF accounts are those accounts which have been established for monetary donations.**

Established *after* the house is turned over to VA

Fisher House GPF accounts are earmarked accounts set up to receive donations specifically to support the needs of the Fisher Houses and Fisher House families only. They cannot be used to support other facility programs.

Donations received by the medical facility to support the local Fisher House must be accepted in accordance with Federal Regulations and VA policy in collaboration with VA Voluntary Service (VAVS)

Donations received by VA must be deposited into the Fisher House GPF

# VA Fisher Houses and Service Animals



# VA Fisher House Program Service Animal Policy

## **VHA Directive 1188: Animals on Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Property**

- Only dogs that are individually trained to perform work or tasks on behalf of an individual with a disability will be considered service animals. All other animals will not be permitted in VA facilities, unless expressly allowed as an exception under the regulation (e.g. for Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA) or Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT), or for other reasons such as law enforcement purposes).
- VA will not require any proof of a service animal's training or certification for purposes of access. However, for Veterans with a service animal that are receiving treatment in a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) residential program, records of the service animal's vaccinations will be required.
- A service animal must be removed from VA property if the animal exhibits disruptive behavior or other signs that it is a threat to the health or safety of individuals or other service animals while on VA property. Such signs may include but are not limited to biting, snapping, or growling.
- Service animals may access VA property subject to the same terms, conditions, and regulations that govern the admission of the public to VA property, to include the exclusion of service animals from certain areas on VHA properties to ensure that patient care, patient safety, and infection control standards are not compromised (e.g., service animals will not be permitted in operating rooms or areas where medical equipment is sterilized or stored).
- At no time is any VA employee to be responsible for the control of the service animal. The owner of the service animal is responsible for cleaning animal waste, should an animal relieve itself on VA property.

# VA Fisher House Program Service Animal Guest Agreement Addendum



## VA Fisher House Guest Agreement Addendum: Service Animals

VHA Directive 1188 defines a Service Animal as the following: A service animal is identified as any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by the service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition. Service dogs in training are not considered service animals. This definition applies regardless of whether VA is providing benefits to support a service dog under 38 CFR 17.148. **NOTE:** This definition includes guide dogs and seeing-eye dogs. *This definition does not include emotional support or comfort or companion animals, or pets.* VA staff is permitted to ask the following clarifying questions related to service animals:

1. Is your dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or tasks has your dog been trained to perform?

If a guest is accompanied by a service animal during their Fisher House stay, the guest is responsible for the service animal at all times. Responsibilities include:

- a. Individuals requesting Fisher House accommodations accompanied by service animals must inform the Fisher House Manager prior to check-in. Only one service animal is permitted to accompany each Fisher House guest.
- b. The service animal must provide direct support to the Fisher House Guest. A service animal assigned to a hospitalized Servicemember or Veteran will not be permitted to stay in the Fisher House with the hospitalized Veteran's family member or Caregiver.
- c. The service animal must be in a harness, on a leash, or tethered and under control of the handler at all times. The service animal may not be left in the Fisher House unattended for any period of time.
- d. The handler must provide water, food and elimination breaks for the service animal as needed. Fisher House staff, volunteers or contractors are not permitted to care for, supervise, or assume responsibility for a service animal (that is not the staff member's service animal) while the service animal is on VA property. This includes boarding or kenneling the service animal.
- e. If the service animal eliminates its waste inside the Fisher House, or other area on VA property that requires the waste to be removed, the handler is responsible for such removal.
- f. Service animals are restricted from communal food preparation areas including the Fisher House kitchen, except when the direct support/assistance of the service animal is required by the Fisher House guest during meal preparation.

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- g. The Fisher House guest must provide documentation that the service animal has a current rabies vaccine and the core canine vaccines required by state or local law.
- h. The service animal must be controlled and well behaved at all times. Examples of the service animal not being in control include: barking that is not brought under immediate control by the handler and jumping on individuals or furniture.
- i. The service animal must be housebroken and trained to eliminate waste in an outdoor area.
- j. The Fisher House guest will be responsible for any damages to Fisher House property caused by the service animal.
- k. The service animal will not pose a health or safety risk to patients, visitors, VA staff or other employees, or other service animals. In determining whether an animal poses such risk, VA staff will make an individualized assessment based on objective indications to ascertain the severity of the risk. Examples of such indications include but are not limited to: external signs of aggression such as snapping, biting, growling, or lunging, or external signs of disease or poor health such as visible parasites, diarrhea, or vomiting.
- l. Fisher House guests who do not strictly adhere to the guidelines related to service animals will be asked to remove the service animal from the Fisher House. The Fisher House guest may also be asked to leave the Fisher House and seek alternative accommodations.

I have read the Supplemental VA Fisher House Agreement related to Service Animals and agree to comply with all the stated rules. I understand that failure to comply with the rules may result in removal from the Fisher House.

Guest Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Guest Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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# Community Partnerships

This is home of our Fisher House guests. Community partner visits and activities should be scheduled in advance with the Fisher House Manager or designee; and offer minimal disruption to the house . Unannounced visits may lead to increased stress for families and take the FH Manager away from meeting the needs of guests/program management responsibilities.

Communicate requests for house access in email when possible. Clearly state the purpose for the event, anticipated number of attendees, anticipated media coverage.

FH Managers welcome suggestions for donations (e.g. pergolas, grills, gazebos, storage). The final decision on accepting the donation is made by the VA facility in collaboration with the national VA Fisher House Program.

FH Managers use a gift card tracking system and should provide use information back to the community partner.

# FY 2019 Fisher House Program Initiatives

Initiate Fisher House construction for 3 additional VA facilities

Incorporate Suicide Prevention efforts into the VA Fisher House Program

Publish a National VA Fisher House Program SOP to address gift card donation acceptance, use and tracking

Develop a National Fisher House Reservation tracking application

VA Fisher House Program support for the 2019 Warrior Games

# National VA Fisher House Program Resources

VA Fisher House Program Internet Page:

[www.socialwork.va.gov/Fisher\\_House\\_Locations.asp](http://www.socialwork.va.gov/Fisher_House_Locations.asp)

Fisher House Manager Peer Mentoring Program

VA Fisher House program Community Partner Reference Guide

VA Fisher House Program SharePoint

VA Fisher House Program PULSE Page

VA Fisher House Program Toolkit/ Community Partner Reference Guide

VA Fisher House Program TMS Training

VHA Directive 1107: VA Fisher Houses and Other Temporary Lodging

Fisher House Foundation website: [www.fisherhouse.org](http://www.fisherhouse.org)

# For More Information



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**VA Fisher House and Family Hospitality Program  
Care Management and Social Work (10P4C)**

**VA Central Office**

**Phone: 724-996-2717**

**[www.socialwork.va.gov/Fisher\\_House\\_Locations.asp](http://www.socialwork.va.gov/Fisher_House_Locations.asp)**

**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
Patient Care Services  
*Care Management and Social Work*

