

Veteran Finds Safety and Relief Through HPRP and HUD-VASH

Positive Stories / Lessons Learned from HPRP: *Individual Success Story*

HPRP Grantee:	City of Philadelphia
CoC Name and Number:	PA-500 – Philadelphia CoC

Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	3,324	Total persons in TH:	1,890
Total persons in Safe Haven:	66	Total unsheltered persons:	500
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	5,780		

DJ* is a Gulf War Era veteran. In the spring of 2002, she left her husband and their two young children at home in Texas and departed to serve in the U.S. Army. Two years into her second tour, she was in an automobile accident in Iraq, and over the next six months, sustained further injuries that left her suffering from facial scarring, tinnitus, back pain, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She was honorably discharged in 2008 and returned home to her family.

Back at home, her husband began to abuse her; what should have been a place of safety and recovery became all too similar to the chaotic environment that she had left in Iraq. Unemployed due to her disabilities and soon housebound with a newborn, she and her children lived with violence and hostility for two years. Finally, the situation escalated to a level at which she could barely function. She fled with her children to her hometown of Philadelphia.

Various relatives opened their homes at first, but none could accommodate the mental health struggles that accompanied her PTSD for very long. Her only income was service-connected disability

compensation, and there were no job offers in sight. DJ and her children took up residence in an abandoned building without electricity or hot water.

An outreach worker from the Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service Educational Center spoke to DJ multiple times about the Center's day program for homeless veterans that could provide re-housing assistance. It took some convincing - DJ was hesitant to seek help as a veteran or to identify as a victim of domestic violence - but she eventually agreed to a one-on-one intake assessment and entered HPRP.

In an atmosphere that provides specialized support for veterans, DJ began to flourish. HPRP referred her to the local VA Medical Center for counseling and job development. She moved into her own apartment the next month, pre-furnished and stocked with donations of food, personal care items, and clothing for her and her children. Her HPRP case manager noticed during check-ins that she continued to struggle emotionally and financially, and recommended that she apply for a HUD-VASH subsidy for veterans.

DJ exited HPRP and used her HUD-VASH voucher to move into a brand new, three-bedroom apartment in a rental complex for veterans. HUD-VASH provides her with ongoing support and she stays in touch with the veteran community at large; she is also financially stable and pursuing her bachelor's degree. Her HPRP case manager is able to stay involved through a separate partnership with the rental complex, and DJ has maintained this relationship as well her VA mental health counseling for the past year and a half. The smooth transition from HPRP to HUD-VASH, as well as the support she has received at each step, has given DJ renewed strength and determination. She is now thriving as a parent, a student, and a community member, and she is optimistic about the future.

**Names have been changed for confidentiality.*

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