



SAN DIEGO  
HOUSING  
COMMISSION

**News Release**

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## **185 ADDITIONAL FEDERAL HOUSING VOUCHERS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS AWARDED TO THE SAN DIEGO HOUSING COMMISSION**

*Collaborative effort with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ensures  
homeless veterans receive clinical health services*

**SAN DIEGO, CA**—As veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice are remembered this Memorial Day weekend, help is on the way for homeless veterans in the City of San Diego thanks to 185 federal housing vouchers awarded to the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC).

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocates these vouchers through its Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program. The VASH voucher program was created in 2007 to help homeless veterans rebuild their lives.

San Diego Mayor Bob Filner [announced](#) the award of the additional VASH vouchers.

“This gives the San Diego Housing Commission the chance to get 185 people into homes of their own,” Filner said. “You can’t imagine the change in lives that represents. The term ‘homeless veteran’ should not be in our vocabulary.”

Homeless veterans must be participants in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) program, which offers clinical health and case management services, before they are eligible to receive a VASH voucher, which SDHC provides.

“The VASH voucher program is a valuable tool to help address the problem of homelessness among military veterans,” said SDHC President & CEO Richard C. Gentry. “These 185 additional vouchers raise the total number to 620, which have been awarded to the San Diego Housing Commission since 2008.”

One of the homeless veterans in San Diego who has benefited from a VASH voucher is Rodrigo, a 55-year-old U.S. Army veteran who was discharged in 1977 after suffering a leg injury during training exercises.

Gentry noted that while Rodrigo saw no combat, he had a war of his own going on. After losing confidence in himself due to his injury, Rodrigo struggled with alcoholism and drugs for decades.

Rodrigo was homeless for several years, living on the streets and shelters, before getting help from the VA. He qualified in 2011 for a VASH voucher provided by SDHC and moved into an apartment of his own.

“I’m thankful to the San Diego Housing Commission for providing the VASH voucher that has turned my life around,” Rodrigo said. “I have a place of my own instead of living in a cardboard box in El Cajon off the freeway.”

Soon after moving into his apartment, Rodrigo began to participate in programs and courses at the SDHC Achievement Academy, a state-of-the-art learning and skills center and computer lab located at SDHC’s downtown San Diego headquarters.

The SDHC Achievement Academy emphasizes career planning, job skills, and personal financial education—at no cost to VASH and federal Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) participants and public housing residents in the City of San Diego.

At the SDHC Achievement Academy, Rodrigo received job training and learned how to write a resume and how to conduct himself during job interviews.

What he learned at the SDHC Achievement Academy helped Rodrigo land a job he loves at a locally based laundry facility.

Case workers at the VA ensure that clients like Rodrigo also receive necessary clinical health and case management services. Once they are determined eligible, the clients are referred to SDHC for housing assistance. To remain eligible, participants are required to engage in case management with an assigned VA case worker.

“We have enjoyed a very strong and collaborative relationship with the San Diego Housing Commission, and we look forward to the continuation of that partnership,” said Jessica Chamberlain, LCSW, Chief of Social Work Service for the VA. “What makes the VASH program so unique is that it targets the most vulnerable and chronically homeless veterans in our community.”

As administrator of the vouchers, SDHC verifies that veterans receiving rental assistance comply with all requirements of the VASH program.

Frank Riley, director of HUD’s San Diego office, also attended Thursday’s VASH voucher announcement.

For more information about how SDHC supports housing for military veterans, visit [www.sdhc.org](http://www.sdhc.org).

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