



## HOW CAN HOMELESS VETERANS HELP CHANGE THE FACE OF THE VA?

*“What has proven to be especially effective in this process was the inclusion and level of engagement that of the veterans themselves. It gave them a voice in the services that the VA should offer and the types of facilities that need to be created to house such services.”*

*—Michael Moreland  
VA Network Director, VISN 4*

### CHALLENGE

To perform an in-depth study of the VA's user groups (patients, families, staff, community members, and government officials) in order to gain a true understanding of the specific needs of all veterans while also enhancing the daily operational efficiency of the facility.

### METHODS

fathom conducted one-on-one interviews with patients, staff, and families; photo documentation; immersion, storytelling; Discovery Sessions; and background research into mental illness and addiction.

### FINDINGS

fathom uncovered the themes of **Balance**, **Resource**, and **Control** as crucial to the ideal VA experience.

### SELECTED ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

Physical and emotional **Balance** fostered in the neighborhood setting of the residential living villas where balconies, front porches, varying rooflines, shutters and picture windows feel like home. Inside, warm wood floors, carpeted stairs and varying schemes between villas provide a stark contrast to the institutional facility of the past. Seven separate residential villas offer a mix of private and semiprivate spaces so that privacy and community are balanced.

**Resources** include the guidance, care and support of staff and patients on the healing journey. On a large scale, the Central Support Building offers vets resources like group dining, job development, and educational facilities. On a more personal scale, families and staff can connect through a cookout in picnic areas or basketball game with patients in outdoor recreational areas.

Patients here have greater **Control** not only over their environment, but over their treatment. They are being given choices with moveable furniture, ample areas for storage and display of personal items, and dimmers on light fixtures. And they're also relearning the skills they will need to re-enter society by doing things like cooking and cleaning (with staff supervision as needed).

The VA experience changes lives, and this new concept for a traditional domiciliary will serve as a flagship facility for the program and may be duplicated around the country.



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