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# Patchogue Organization Looking To Help Homeless Veterans

The Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk now provides financial support for veterans struggling due to the coronavirus pandemic.




Priscila Korb, Patch Staff

Posted Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 5:02 pm ET

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The non-profit is hoping to avoid veterans living in the streets. (Shutterstock)

PATCHOGUE, NY — A Patchogue non-profit organization is now looking to help Suffolk County veterans amid the coronavirus pandemic. The [Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk](#) normally has always worked to offer financial assistance to eligible Suffolk County residents, but is now also working to help veterans since the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program, a federally funded program via the VA, came out to Long Island. The group works with local veterans who are either homeless or on the verge of homelessness.

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"We realize that there are a lot of people currently falling behind on rent," Rich Dellasso, SSVF Outreach Coordinator, said. "Currently, the moratorium that is in place is helping our veterans to not be evicted in the event that they have fallen behind."

According to Dellasso, the organization wants to let people know that there is help available and they do not have to wait until they or their family are on the streets. The program office has even increased their budget through the CARES Act funding to ensure that any veteran that is in need of rental assistance is able to get it

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"We want to help them rectify their situation so once life gets somewhat back to normal, their living situation is one less thing for them to worry about," he said.

There are certain criteria that do need to be met to qualify for the program. The veteran must be discharged (except for dishonorable), have served at least one day of Active Duty, meet a monetary criteria that shows that they are either behind in rent or that they have a letter of eviction (in other words, proof of homelessness or risk of homelessness).

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"There is so much that our veterans are entitled too and they just don't know about it," Dellasso said. "While our main goal is housing, we can set them up with the proper channels to seek additional benefits that they may not know they are entitled to."

Suffolk County is home to the highest number of veterans in the state with more than 75,000 veterans in 2010. This next year, Dellasso says the

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Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk has seen an increase in the number of veterans that need help to pay their rent as a result of the pandemic.

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"There are things that veterans may not realize that they are entitled to in light of COVID," he said. "This program existed long before COVID became an issue but based off trends that we are seeing, there are going to be a lot of people falling behind."

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