VOA

SO! Here's the rub with VOA. We've got the Adult Detox program, this is where I work. We are here for seniors, but in addition everyone over 18.

Volunteers of America, Utah offers two residential options for individuals to detoxify from drugs and alcohol: The Adult Detoxification Center and the Center for Women and Children--females only.

We are a SOCIAL detox center, meaning we do not have any nurses or doctors here. Our goal here is to safely detox individuals from drugs and alcohol. With a clear head they can then choose to enter rehab. We give them a safe environment to detox, we give them 3 meals a day with snacks, a warm bed, life skills lessons during the day, and optional recovery meetings every night (AA, NA, CMA, etc.).

Requirements to get into the facility: They must be a SL county resident. Most of our funding comes from block grants and county tax payers largely keep us running, but we do rely on donations as well. One must be medically appropriate for the facility. This means if you're a diabetic, for example, you must admit with your insulin etc. You must have used a substance within the past 72-hours, if you're not using drugs or alcohol, you're not detoxing off anything and not appropriate for our facility.

We are a 14-day program. We are impatient only, they cannot leave. We are NOT a lockdown facility, they can discharge whenever they want. If they clients make it the full 14-days the county comes in and does a 2-hour assessment of them (Assessment and Referral Services, ARS). Based on how they answer the questions, ARS gives them a referral into a long-term rehab center (we're the first step, short term detox, then they go to long-term rehab once clean). The sad reality is that after making it 14-days sober there is often a wait list to break into the next location. The Oddysey House, The Haven, The First Step House, all have 6-month waiting lists. The ARS referral is still live and good, but clients tend to relapse when leaving because they're back on the streets.

Easily, 50%+ of our clients are homeless. I would also say that 50% of our clients are over age 40.

The VOA detox is about to undergo a 1.5 million dollar building upgrade. Currently we house 52 clients, and we'll be adding more beds by fall 2012 with the much-needed upgrade. We have been in Salt Lake City for 25 years.

VOA detox has paid contracts with the county police, too. It's called the Jail Diversion Program (JDP). The goal here is to keep drunkards out of jail for the night and with us instead. We are $65 per day to house people, a night in jail $85, a night in the ER is thousands. And these people do not belong in jail anyway, so we're freeing up the jails for crazies who belong in jail. We also save cops a lot of time. We have a van that can go pick drunkards up vs. a cop having to drive a subject to the drunk tank, check them in, and do all the booking paperwork. This can often take hours, the JDP program saves the cops much time by freeing them up. Gets them back to fighting real crime; Cops love us.

The sad reality is that a lot of our clients are homeless and use us regularly for shelter. They check-in again and again, legitamitley detoxing, but no huge intentions to "get clean". I'm happy to help these "frequent flyers" as we call them. Some people might take 5, 10, or 20 episodes to decide to stop using drugs. And we can know that if they're sleeping at our facility they're safe. Today we helped, all we can focus on is today.

We've had a few clients fall asleep drunk outside this winter and lose their limbs due to severe frost bite. In 2011, 45 adults died on the streets, usually from the elements. This doesn't have to be this way with proper homelessness plans for seniors. Philadelphia, for example, had ONE person die in 2011 on the streets.

Check out [www.voaut.org](http://www.voaut.org/) for more info.

LASTLY, I suggest you call 2-1-1. It's a free number supported by the United Way. You can talk to an operator and they have a list of ALL the government and social services available. If you ask about "senior" options, they might be able to give you some good referrals.