

Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2022, 11:00 am – 1:00pm EST

The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) convened a 2-hour public meeting, which primarily focused on programmatic updates from our Federal partners on December 13, 2022.

Committee Members Present:

Jennifer Leimaile Ho, Chair, ACHV; Commissioner, Minnesota Housing
Tammy Bellofatto, Executive Director of Bayaud Enterprises
Tramecia Garner, LPCC, Chief Operating Officer/Housing Director, Swords to Plowshares
Sharon Green, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Alethes Consulting Group, LLC
Kathryn Monet, Chief Executive Officer, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
Bilal Mustafa, Community Organizer, Swords to Plowshares
Abraham Thompson Jr., DC VAMC Employee and Veteran
Jessica Venegas, Principal for Strategic Partnerships, Community Solutions International
Brandon Wilson, Director of Veteran Services of the Carolinas

Committee Members –Absent

Brad Bridwell, Director of National Operations for Cloudbreak Communities
Karl Calhoun, Director of Safety Net Programs/Partnerships at LA Care Health Plan

Ex Officio Members – Present

Heather Denny, Education for Homeless Children and Youth Team, Department of Education (ED)
Detra Giles, Assistant Director, Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement, Office of Field Operations, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)
Yashika D. Neaves, Ph.D., Policy & Communication Strategist, Department of Defense (DoD) Military Civilian Transition Office
Stacey Owens, MSW, LCSW-C, Military and Veterans Affairs Liaison for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Monshi Ramdass, Military Veteran Agricultural Liaison (MVAL) and Veterans Outreach Manager in the Department of Agriculture, Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, and the Military Veteran Agricultural Liaison's Office, in the Office of the Secretary

Ex Officio Member – Absent

Greg Crawford, Correctional Program Specialist at the National Institute of Corrections (NIC)
Jeff Olivet, Executive Director, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)
Ivan Denton, Director, Office of National Programs, Department of Labor (DOL)
Norm Suchar, Director, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Committee Support Staff Present:

Anthony Love, Designated Federal Officer, ACHV, VHA Homeless Program Office (HPO)
Leisa Davis, Alternate Designated Federal Officer (DFO), VHA HPO
Tisha Hardin, MSW, LISW-S, LICDC, Special Assignment, VHA HPO
Candace Parker, MSW, LMSW, LCSW-A, Special Assignment VHA HPO

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Additional attendees may present for a portion or all of the meeting and/or attend for situational awareness. Some, but not all, attendees identified themselves by name. Attendees are not required to identify themselves. The following were identified by their full or partial name:

Jill Albanese
Ryann Testban
Sarah Nierman
John Savage
Karen Cinibulk
Meghan Deal
Nashid Dickerson
Nikki Barfield
Rose Dunaway
Ryann Esteban
Sarah Nierman
Ari Rogers
Bob Urell
Chris Brown
Dr. Joe N Savage
George Riedel
Heaney-Matthew
Jamison Hild

- **Jennifer Ho, Chair, ACHV (Opening Comments)**
 - Today's agenda includes an update from Jill Albanese on VHA's Homeless Program Strategic Plan and recommendations on the following topics: Transitioning Service Members, Employment and Geriatrics.

- **Jill Albanese Director of Clinical Operations/Senior Advisor to the Executive Director VHA Homeless Programs Office Strategic Plan Overview**
 - Secretary's goal was 38,000 and we are hitting the goal.
 - We offered technical assistance to improve community systems and that was helpful and we are going to continue this as a priority.
 - Lack of community housing stock continues to be a problem.
 - The West continues to have a large number of unsheltered homeless Veterans.
 - The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to address unsheltered homelessness. More funding is becoming available than in the past and VA is prioritizing this along with our federal partners.
 - We will continue to focus on returns to homelessness after HUD VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) and Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) placement. We want to decrease the return to homelessness and look at promising practices to improve permanent housing.
 - Low Barrier options such as Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) and Grant Per Diem (GPD)--Continue to look at barriers to entry, policies that are dismissing Veterans. We want low barriers and understanding it takes time and it's not an overnight fix.
 - We refresh our strategic planning each year and republish it in March.

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- **Questions and Answers**

- Jennifer Ho “How much does the workforce shortages and challenge issues make it difficult to establish more low barrier housing? Are you anticipating unique strategies related to workforces?”
 - VA’s Response: All healthcare agencies are having staffing issues. With SSVF it’s a little bit better because it’s easier and they offer more. With the Cares Act, GPD was able to increase rates to get more qualified staff. We are looking at internal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Funds for Recruitment and Retention of staffing. We know it’s a challenge and we are looking to incentivize staff at the VA, SSVF and GPD. We are working with Workforce Management to make this more permanent. We recognize the impact.
- Tramecia Garner “We need to hire contract providers to keep staffing up in some positions. It’s getting more challenging to hire compassionate and competent staff in nonprofits given the salaries we are able to pay. Thank you for your feedback.”
- Kathryn Monet “You have been doing really great work around targeted universalism and diversity, equity and inclusion. How will that work be carried forward on future strategic planning?”
 - VA’s Response: We are looking at that closer before January. We have the dashboard that has the data. Now how are we going to incorporate this into our programs and policies. We need to implement and incorporate into our planning.
 - A full assessment was completed and shared with the workgroup. The workgroup will form goals and come up with implementation strategies.

- **Brandon Wilson and Kathryn Monet –Recommendations and Processes**

- Introduced the ACHV Members that presented the recommendations for: Transitioning Service Members/Suicide Prevention, Employment and Geriatrics.

- **Sharon Green: Transitioning Service Members/Suicide Prevention Recommendations**

- Celebrate the unity the departments formed working together so that our Service members have a joint action plan supporting Veterans as they transition from uniformed service to civilian life.
- Update VA’s Benefits and Services Participant Guide to make it Veteran friendly, increase awareness, and distribute it in a feasible manner (direct email, print, advertisement, partner relationship) to all Veterans and Veteran caretakers with boots-on-the-ground organizations - Veteran Service Organizations (VSO), Vet Centers, and other VA and community partners to share the new post 2019 initiatives (online and in print) that are now available to the Veterans who separated 2019 and earlier. (Timeline for Action: May 2024)
- Adopt the Army’s “preparation” model of Be-Know-Do, emphasizing the “Do” in addition to static instruction. Real-time responses will provide a check-on-learning and confirmation of the TAP program’s effectiveness for all involved.

- **Tammy Bellofatto: Employment Recommendations**

- In 2022, we compared similarities and difference between the Department of Labor Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) and SSVF to see how these programs can work to support Veterans homelessness.

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- We believe Veteran homeless and healthcare is important but we need a third part which is employment, healthy or meaningful activities, and/or self-sustainability.
 - Our recommendation is for VA to prioritize employment by enhancing existing programs and integrating other agency programs through collaboration.
 - VA should establish a 120-day taskforce that is dedicated to the exploration of how Veteran employment is being prioritized and incorporated into all VA programs. VA should provide strategies on how to work with other federal partners to establish a concerted effort.
 - VA should include an ACHV member on the task force to improve transparency.
 - VA should establish recommendations and publish results by June 2024.
- **Tramecia Garner: Aging Recommendations**
 - Site-based permanent supported housing with enhanced staffing in higher-cost markets are needed for both aging and other complex care
 - Difficulty with higher-cost markets
 - Many Veterans are looking for onsite housing services due to increased needs
 - High staff burnout and complicated care needs
 - Recommendation is for VA to:
 - Look at contract care to keep consistent care and reduce gaps in care
 - Provide contract funding to enhance services for enhanced care compared to the California model. This is compared to high-cost markets
 - Focus more on peer support and transportation. Not necessarily clinical care but to enhance those services and take the load off. Ancillary services to bridge a gap
 - Timeline for Action (May 2024)

The recommendations were voted upon and approved by the Committee.

Closing Comments by Committee Members:

- Jennifer Ho: We have been through hard times during the pandemic and we have been able to have meetings and do the report.
- Kathryn Monet: I hope to make progress.
- Abraham Thompson, Jr: Thank everyone for all you do so Veterans don't have to live on the streets.
- Bilal Mustafa: I hope the people at the top stay connected at the bottom.
- Sharon Green: The new group works together and is creative and see Veterans first.
- Brandon Wilson: I am hopeful that the VA will remain receptive to our recommendations.
- Jennifer Ho: I appreciate the diversity here.

Summary of Committee Requests for Information and Responses:

The Homeless Program Office will work with the appropriate points of contact to acquire the responses to the follow-up action items and share them with the Committee.

Adjournment -- Jennifer Ho, Chair, ACHV adjourned the meeting on December 13, 2022. I hereby certify,

that to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.



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The minutes will be formally considered by the committee at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.