

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HOMELESS VETERANS



19th ANNUAL REPORT

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
19th Annual Report**

HISTORY

On December 21, 2001, P.L. 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001, became effective. The Act revised, improved and consolidated provisions of law providing benefits and services for homeless Veterans and authorized an Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (Committee). In response to its provisions, the Committee was established on March 1, 2002, pursuant to 38 U.S.C. § 2066. The mission of the Committee is to advise and make recommendations to the Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Congress on issues affecting homeless Veterans. Additionally, the Committee assesses the needs of homeless Veterans to determine whether VA and other programs and services are meeting those needs.

MEMBERS

The Secretary of VA selects Committee members from experts knowledgeable in treating mental illness and substance abuse disorders, as well as those adept at developing permanent housing alternatives for lower-income populations. Additional experts selected by the Secretary include State Veterans' Affairs officials, community-based service providers, advocates of homeless Veterans and homeless individuals in both the civilian and Veteran populations. The members serve without pay, in accordance with the Committee's charter.

A brief biographical summary of each Committee member is attached (Attachment 1). Attachment 2 lists the Committee Support Staff and Ex-Officio Members.

COMMITTEE REPORT IN BRIEF

This is the 19th annual report filed by the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV). The Committee is pleased that the Administration and Congress have set a platform that is resulting in an end to Veteran homelessness in a growing number of communities, both large and small; and encourages the Administration to retain ending homelessness among Veterans as a top priority, with the special emphasis and focus our Veterans deserve.

As the Committee that advises you on ways to reduce and end Veteran homelessness, we want to recognize the continued historic progress VA and its partners have made. Since 2010, Veteran homelessness has been reduced by nearly half. To put it in proper perspective, we are not aware of any other social problems in this Nation that have seen such a dramatic reduction.

The Housing First model, which rapidly places Veterans experiencing homelessness into Permanent Supportive Housing, has been effective. With that said, the Committee acknowledges the importance of a more integrated approach, particularly one that can accommodate for the social determinants of health, including employment; transportation; and toxic stress. Housing First does not mean Housing *Only*. Since VA has different programs that address different aspects, we want to return to our recommendation that was included in last year's annual report to consolidate and elevate how these programs are led.

People of color and Native Americans are disproportionately represented in the Veteran population we serve; as such, we recognize that racial equality should be centered in all VA strategies to end Veteran homelessness moving forward.

In response to the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, Congress and VA provided additional funding in 2021 through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. This legislation improved communities' capacity to address the needs of Veterans struggling not only with the pandemic, but also with homelessness and mental health concerns. We applaud VA and its community partners for their heroic efforts to maintain and advance the quality of care during this challenging time. We think it is critical to reflect, as we shift out of fast-paced crisis response mode, on what we learned and how those lessons can be applied to the work ahead.

We make these recommendations not knowing where we will be by the time this report reaches the Secretary's desk and thus, outside of learning from this experience, do not identify specific new COVID-19 related recommendations. As COVID-19 specific needs arise, ACHV will continue to use letters between reports as warranted.

Since the authorization and implementation of ACHV, we have been pleased that most of our recommendations have been brought to the attention of or remain under active consideration by the Secretary and Congress for implementation. Our recommendations are based on data, personal knowledge, experience and information provided in person and in writing from a variety of sources, including direct input from Veterans experiencing homelessness, community partners and stakeholders. We have focused on matters we believe should be emphasized. We also encourage continued collaboration with other Federal partners. These recommendations are part of an ongoing conversation about the need for integrated efforts, especially as they pertain to health care access, housing and suicide prevention for unhoused Veterans.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Our recommendations are grouped under three main headers:

1. Consolidate and Elevate Homelessness Program Leadership and Direction within VA;
2. Prioritize Racial Equity and Racial Justice Across All Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness; and

3. Assess the COVID-19 Response to Quickly Incorporate What Worked Best into Ongoing Policy and Programming.

In order to make substantial gains for ending Veteran homelessness nationally, we wholeheartedly agree that VA should stay its course and continuously improve previously adopted models, including Housing First that led to dramatic reductions. We believe that combining this with the recommendations set forth below would accelerate progress by making it easier to integrate efforts across different Veterans Health Administration (VHA) homeless programs, disseminate best practices nationally faster, get at the underlying causes of such racial disparities in which Veterans become homeless in the first place and harvest everything we learned moving at top speeds during the height of the pandemic. We further believe prioritizing these recommendations would help communities integrate efforts faster, confront racial inequities and injustices more directly and become more nimble in our collective response.

It would also be wise to consider the links between racial injustice, employment, access to health care and homelessness. Per [VA's 2021 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#), the authors have identified various groups of minority Veterans facing financial insecurity and economic vulnerability. That same report goes on to discuss confronting micro and macro societal issues (equity, equality and justice) as they relate to these factors. The intersectionality of these two VA top priorities beckons us to look closer at the social determinants of health across the board. Ultimately, there is no better time than now to implement a multipronged approach that brings together local stakeholders across the employment, education, health care and housing sectors with the express intention of keeping Veterans safe, stably housed and productive participants in their communities.

Recommendation 1: Consolidate and elevate homelessness program leadership and direction within VA.

The current reporting structure of VHA's Homeless Programs Office does not effectively support solving this issue once and for all.

The mission-critical programs VA operates in its efforts to end homelessness among Veterans are:

- Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH);
- Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF);
- VA Grant and Per Diem (GPD); and
- Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV).

Supplementary programs include:

- Veterans Justice Outreach;

- Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services;
- Community Resource and Referral Centers; and
- Homeless Patient Aligned Care Teams among others.

Each of these programs plays a critical role in ending homelessness among Veterans and must be effectively coordinated to create a seamless continuum of care that facilitates change initiatives, innovation and implementation of best practices.

As the Nation's largest health care organization and the second largest Federal Government agency, VA must consider the effectiveness of its organizational structure and improve on it in order to facilitate the on the ground execution of your stated mission through the 143 VA medical centers (VAMC).

Among the four key housing programs, three operate through hospital-level management structures (HUD-VASH, HCHV Contract Residential Services and GPD), while one SSVF operates through VA Central Office. Most supplemental programs operate through the local hospital management as well. Homelessness among Veterans is a complex, community-based problem and requires seamless access to the entire toolbox of resources to house and empower Veterans. Ending homelessness among Veterans requires a clear theory of change that can be implemented nationally, quickly borrowing from local innovation and raising the bar so that all communities are expected to make accelerated progress toward the end goal.

Today, the VHA Homeless Programs Office serves primarily as an advisor to Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISN) and VAMCs regarding the strategies they should consider implementing locally (VA Functional Organization Manual 2020, Pages 108-109).

ACHV recommends that this office be elevated to the Secretary level (akin to that of the Center for Women Veterans and the Center for Minority Veterans) with a direct reporting relationship from the VHA Homeless Programs Office with monthly updates on the progress to ending homelessness until this mission is completed.

This will facilitate executing a national strategy, reducing cost by starting with prevention, deepening resources as needed and reducing racial disparity with flexible and tailored interventions based on the unique needs of Veterans.

VA Response: Concur-in-Principle. VA's Secretary and Chief of Staff are directly and actively engaged on the topic of homelessness, and the Executive Director of the VHA Homeless Programs Office briefs the Chief of Staff on a biweekly basis. The Secretary has further assigned his Senior Advisor for Health to stay actively engaged on this topic and has appointed a Senior Executive Homelessness Agent (Greater Los Angeles) to focus on VA's efforts to end Veteran homelessness in Los Angeles.

Recommendation 2: Prioritize Racial Equity and Racial Justice Across All Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness.

VA is making progress with respect to racial justice and racial equity but there is still much to do to overcome structural issues that create disparities among homeless Veterans of color. Recent data from VA's Race Equity Dashboard indicated proportionate outcomes across many racial groups in key metrics such as positive exits and housing placements. However, some groups, especially Black Veterans, presented as homeless at significantly higher rates. A recent HUD report on homelessness in the general population indicated that Black people are nearly half of the homeless population while representing only 13% of the general population. Data has consistently shown that Black Veterans, when adjusted for their percentage of the overall Veteran population, experience homelessness at almost three times the rate of the general Veteran population. Also, despite recent expansion of the Tribal HUD-VASH Act, much work is still needed to address homelessness (especially unsheltered homelessness) among Native American Veterans. Continued progress toward equity for racial groups showing higher rates of homelessness requires innovations both within and beyond VHA's homeless programs. Some programs, SSVF for example, have increased priority on preventive measures; however, a comprehensive preventive strategy by VA targeting the needs of unstably housed Veterans of color will significantly improve homeless outcomes for all Veterans.

Recommendation 2A: ACHV recommends that VA formalize a comprehensive set of upstream strategies to address racial equity related to homelessness and housing, methods and practices that identify risk factors for homelessness and that help prevent the fall into homelessness among housed Veterans of color. These strategies should be designed to prevent Veterans of color falling into homelessness at disproportionate rates. VA's over-arching goal as it relates to upstream interventions should be that the rates of homelessness for Veterans of color should match, or be less than, the rates of Veterans of color overall. Additionally, the strategies created in pursuit of this goal should, in turn, be used as a foundation for developing a broadly applicable framework for upstream interventions to prevent all at-risk Veterans from falling into homelessness.

While VA has made race equity and race justice a clear priority, currently, much of the strategic work in the area is folded into the work of staff at VHA's Homeless Programs Office who have a broad set of additional roles and responsibilities. Strategic planning and innovation on a subject as important and challenging as racial equity and justice deserves a dedicated staff focusing on it exclusively. The dedicated staff will be able to fully immerse themselves into the issue without distraction of other job duties, likely allowing for a faster *idea-cycle*, from development to implementation.

VA Response: Concur. In 2022, the Racial Equity and Racial Justice Workgroup will work with the interagency prevention workgroup, comprised of representatives from VA, HUD and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, to develop additional upstream strategies to prevent homelessness among Veterans of color. Preliminary

updates on the development of upstream strategies were shared at the April 2022 ACHV Meeting and additional updates will be shared at the April 2023 Meeting.

Recommendation 2B: ACHV recommends that VA assign at least one full-time VHA Homeless Programs Office staff member dedicated 100% of the time to addressing race equity/race justice-related priorities and initiatives set forth by the VHA Homeless Programs Office. This person would also work in conjunction with the Race Equity Workgroup, and be assigned first and foremost with the task of creating and leading top-down strategies to increase racial and cultural competency throughout VA.

VA's creation of the Race Equity Dashboard represents an innovative new method for collecting meaningful data about racial equity across VA's multiple service platforms. This data will, in turn, help identify disparities and facilitate analysis ultimately leading to solutions and implementations to address those disparities. It is important, however, for the data to be comprehensive and available to the public. Stakeholders serving homeless Veterans, as well as the general public, should be provided access to the information compiled throughout the year so they can offer both insights and solutions to any disparities highlighted by the data. VA is the focal point of ideas addressing racial equity and racial justice among homeless Veterans, but it should also benefit from the national discussion and increased national awareness about the issue.

VA Response: Concur-In-Principle. VA remains committed to racial equity and justice, both within homeless programs and across the enterprise. VHA's Homeless Programs Office developed a Racial Equity Social Workgroup. The Workgroup engages in continuous assessments and improvements of racial equity within the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) Homeless Programs Office to serve as the backbone of VA's response to Veteran homelessness, support local homeless program providers when they encounter racial discrimination in the workplace and increase competency and capacity for those providers to deliver patient care free of racism. This framework led to the development of the Racial Equity Improvement Initiative (a data-driven, quality improvement initiative); a racial equity organizational assessment (currently underway); educational trainings hosted via the National Center on Homelessness among Veterans; and a mentorship network which launched in March 2022.

Recommendation 2C: ACHV recommends a coordinated effort to aggregate all VHA Homeless Programs Office data produced by the Race Equity, Race Justice Dashboard. A summary of that aggregated data should be completed and made available to the public, preferably as a component of VA's Annual Report.

VA Response: Concur. VA presented aggregate VHA Homeless Programs Office data produced by the Racial Equity and Racial Justice Workgroup Dashboard at the April 2022 ACHV Meeting and will present as a component in future ACHV Annual Reports.

Recommendation 3: Assess the COVID-19 Response to Quickly Incorporate What Worked Best into Ongoing Policy and Programming.

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the way homeless services are delivered across the country. There was much focus on slowing the spread of COVID-19 among the homeless population. We appreciate the many ways that VA and its grantees across the country stepped up to ensure Veterans were able to access services and supports, and to deploy Congressionally-mandated programs and changes in support of Veterans experiencing and at-risk of homelessness. We are not out of the woods on the pandemic; as we submit this, we are quickly approaching the two-year mark.

Responsible stewardship of resources and Federal programming demands that we assess VHA's Homeless Programs Office's response to the COVID-19 pandemic for several reasons. First is to do a swift assessment of communities that used pandemic-driven strategies to get more Veterans housed. Second is to have a data-based understanding of what has been successful in the event we are ever faced with the need to quickly pivot homeless services to an emergency response posture again. Third is to make permanent helpful changes that improve conditions and outcomes for Veterans.

Additional barriers exist and have slowed progress on communities' abilities to move Veterans into permanent housing rapidly. Ensuring VHA's Homeless Programs Office and its subsidiary grant and/or contract program offices are sufficiently staffed to implement the scale of change required to end Veteran homelessness will be critical to move the needle on Veteran homelessness. Further, communities have deployed innovative strategies such as landlord incentives, navigator models, the GPD program's Transition in Place model and others to address these challenges but their use is not uniform across the country.

Recommendation 3A: We request VA provide a status update on actions taken to speed Veteran access to permanent housing in the preceding areas before April 2022, for discussion in the Committee's April 2022 meeting.

The pandemic brought many lessons about effective public health responses and adapting them to accommodate the needs of people experiencing and at-risk of homelessness. In many communities, VAMCs stepped up to the plate to connect sheltered and unsheltered Veterans to COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. VA has found itself innovating to meet the needs of Veterans, and others can learn from its successes and challenges.

VA Response: Concur. On December 22, 2021, the Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services issued a [memorandum](#) to the VISNs and VAMCs to provide guidance of the availability of SSVF program resources to assist Veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program. The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak caused many public housing authorities (PHA) to temporarily close offices or operate on modified schedules.

These changes may have resulted in a backlog of Veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program being moved into housing. Starting April 24, 2020, until further notice, SSVF modified guidance to allow SSVF grantees to provide housing search assistance, housing placements, security deposits and rental assistance for Veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program and looking for housing. This modification allows Veterans to secure prospective housing while waiting for PHA to issue a HUD-VASH voucher and complete the required housing quality standards inspection. Veterans in HUD-VASH and receiving SSVF housing search, placement, security deposits and rental assistance will be co-enrolled with both programs. Between May 2020 and August 2021, SSVF grantees worked with HUD-VASH to facilitate over 11,000 permanent housing placements of homeless Veterans. VA provided a status update at the April 2022 ACHV Meeting.

The GPD Program continues to serve as a critical resource for communities by providing unsheltered Veterans with safe housing and wraparound services to support their transition to permanent housing. In fiscal year (FY) 2021, GPD programs transitioned more than 8,200 Veterans into permanent housing. Additionally, GPD Case Management grantees continue to support housing retention efforts for formerly homeless Veterans in communities by providing light-touch services to Veterans at risk of losing their permanent housing. In 2021, GPD successfully piloted and operationalized a novel partnership with HUD-VASH and GPD Case Management grantees to support permanent housing placements among lower-acuity Veterans who may not receive immediate prioritization for HUD-VASH vouchers. HUD-VASH GPD Collaborative Case Management (GPD CCM) links community-based grantee case managers with VA HUD-VASH staff to collectively identify Veterans appropriate for this collaboration. The community-based GPD grantee then works with an identified Veteran directly through the pre-housing and lease up processes, and for a subsequent six months after housing placement, before transferring the Veteran back to VA's HUD-VASH team. GPD CCM enhances HUD-VASH voucher utilization while also allowing VA staff to prioritize the most intensive cases. Since GPD CCM's inception in March 2021, to date, 26 grantees linked to 24 VAMC catchment areas across 13 VISNs have formalized their collaboration. VA provided a status update at the April 2022 ACHV Meeting.

Recommendation 3B: We recommend VA complete and publish a meaningful evaluation of lessons learned during the pandemic, related to Veteran homelessness, to prepare for future emergency responses within one year of receipt of this report (December 2022), and take action on relevant findings within two years (December 2024).

Innovative approaches, including increasing program collaboration; supporting hotel and motel placements; de-congregating GPD and HCHV sites; offering safe sleeping sites; and providing telecommunications equipment supported Veterans through the darkest days of the pandemic. The pandemic made clear that housing is so essential to delivering high quality health care, some changes became critically important to offer safe options to those coming from congregate shelter and unsheltered homelessness.

VA Response: Concur-In-Principle. VA has successfully responded to heightened surges related to COVID-19 over the past 2 years and during that time has learned valuable lessons in helping vulnerable Veterans. We have been acting on lessons learned in real-time that will prepare us to better respond to emergencies in the future. VHA's Homeless Programs Office is currently completing a statutory requirement which includes an analysis of the impact and lessons learned specific to the application of new legislation and policy changes during the pandemic. We will share the report with the Committee once completed, as the findings from this review will essentially address ACHV's recommendation. As new variants emerge, we will make the necessary shifts and stay in touch with the Committee on our progress.

Recommendation 3C: ACHV recommends VA make permanent successful components of its COVID-19 response, including but not limited to:

Recommendation 3C1: Maintaining equitable, ongoing, low-barrier access to COVID-19 vaccinations and testing for all who served in the military.

VA Response: Concur. VA agrees vaccination and testing for COVID-19 are important tools to help prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and bring an end to the pandemic. The COVID-19 vaccination helps protect people from getting sick or severely ill with COVID-19 while also helping to protect those around them. The Strengthening and Amplifying Vaccination Efforts to Locally Immunize all Veterans and Every Spouse Act increased the number of those eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine from VA by allowing for the expansion of COVID-19 vaccines to include all Veterans, regardless of eligibility status; spouses; caregivers; and some beneficiaries. Testing by VA is currently limited to eligible Veterans only. However, VA medical facilities are encouraged to work with local and state public health departments and other partners for additional testing options, use readily available self-tests (i.e., home or over the counter tests) and/or partake in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's testing program, Operation Expanded Testing, to increase access to testing for Veterans nationwide. Self-tests are available to all Americans and can be ordered by calling 1-800-232-0233 or visiting www.COVID.gov/tests. Of note, COVID-19 self-tests are an allowable expense under the VHA Financial Alert 2020-22, section 6(b) personal items. Veterans who receive the tests must be eligible recipients according to section 6(a) of the Financial Alert.

Recommendation 3C2: Release successor rounds of GPD Capital Grants and continue to partner with GPD Providers to de-congregate shelter space.

VA Response: Concur-In-Principle. VA is committed to ensuring safe transitional housing for Veterans experiencing homelessness. Congress has supported these efforts by authorizing statutory waivers of capital matching fund requirements and Office of Management and Budget real property disposition requirements. To that end, in FY 2021 the GPD program issued the first round of capital grants, awarding \$64.2M in CARES Act funds, to transform existing congregate spaces into individual bedrooms and bathrooms. A second round of capital grants was announced September 3, 2021, with applications due December 6, 2021. Awards are anticipated to be finalized May

2022. VA expects to have improved approximately 2,000 transitional housing beds after completing these capital grant projects. The need for successor rounds of capital grants to de-congregate spaces will be determined by the Department and will be based on Veteran and community needs, as well as funding availability.

Recommendation 3C3: Continue to hire and contract for HUD-VASH case management staff.

These three changes will facilitate safe access to permanent supportive housing and shelter programs through the end of the pandemic and beyond.

VA Response: Concur. Ensuring adequate case management capacity for all HUD-VASH Veterans remains a priority for VHA's Homeless Programs Office. In the setting of COVID-19, VHA's Homeless Programs Office has supported VAMCs with recruitment, retention and relocation incentives to hire HUD-VASH staff. Additionally, VHA's Homeless Programs Office has partnered with VA's Procurement and Logistics Office to expand access to contracting and developing innovative methods to use contracts that will enhance HUD-VASH case management services. These will be ongoing areas of emphasis for the HUD-VASH program.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Secretary, thank you for the opportunity to provide this set of recommendations, and the 18th annual report preceding it, for your review and consideration. As we continue to battle the effects of COVID-19, VA and its community partners remain strong and committed to our collective efforts to end homelessness among Veterans. We look forward to the improvements that will undoubtedly flourish as a result of the current experience. We appreciate you and your staff's steadfast commitment to the honorable men and women who have served this great country.

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Biographies of Members of the
Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans**

Jennifer Leimaile Ho is the 7th Commissioner of Minnesota Housing, appointed by Governor Tim Walz in December 2018. She has been working to end homelessness since 1999, first as executive director of Hearth Connection and later as deputy director at the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. Her roles have focused on the intersection of health and housing, particularly health care financing and improving outcomes associated with supportive housing.

Jennifer served as the Senior Advisor for Housing and Services at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the Obama Administration and worked with First Lady Michelle Obama to launch the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness.

She currently serves on the board of the National Council of State Housing Agencies. She has served on the boards of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the Melville Charitable Trust and West Side Community Health Services in St. Paul. Jennifer received her Bachelor's Degree in philosophy from Bryn Mawr College.

Tammy Bellofatto is the Executive Director of Bayaud Enterprises in Denver, Colorado. She has been working in the vocational field for more than 11 years with disadvantaged populations. During the last 7 years, she has primarily worked with homeless Veterans. She wrote and administered a large Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program in the Greater Denver area.

When a homeless Veteran enters her services, she does not just assist them with employment. Her team also works with VA and other Veteran service providers to help stabilize the Veteran and wrap around services are the key to success. One of her greatest success stories is when a homeless Veteran accessed services. The Veteran was connected to Supportive Services for Veteran and Families (SSVF) Program and not only obtained housing, but her program also assisted the Veteran in obtaining a career at VA earning \$65,000 per year.

She is a community leader and former Chair and current member of Denver's Road Home Employment Subcommittee. She works with more than 60 service providers in Denver to assist homeless and at-risk individuals gain stability. She works with the local continuum of care, tying employment and housing together for a lasting solution.

She gets to go to work every day and see that Veterans Service Organizations make a difference in the quality of life for Veterans experiencing homelessness. Even if it is a cup of coffee and a conversation, she is there to support Veterans to the level they are ready. Some may take a few days to assist, and others may take a few years, but we move at their pace, so they feel comfortable with the assistance they are receiving. Veterans are proud people, and it may take a while for them to understand that we are

here with a hand up to get them the services they deserve, as they are the amazing people that served our country. She believes that she would add value to the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans as she leads teams that support Veterans experiencing homelessness. She has coached her teams to listen to the Veterans' experiences and how to use a one-on-one approach to walk with them on their journey to sustainability. She is an industry leader on employment issues with homeless Veterans and believes she can shed light on how housing, health care and employment are essential to end Veteran homelessness.

Brad Bridwell has 21 years of experience working with homeless individuals. He has dedicated the past 17 years to specifically assisting homeless Veterans to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Currently, Mr. Bridwell is the Director of National Operations for Cloudbreak Communities, a special needs housing developer for homeless Veterans that has developed more than 3,000 units of housing for Veterans. Previously, he was employed as Arizona's first Homeless Veterans Services Coordinator at the Arizona Department of Veterans Services and was responsible for coalescing stakeholders to create, implement and evaluate the State's effort to end homelessness among Veterans. Mr. Bridwell served as a key leader in Project H3: Home, Health, Hope, a local implementation of the 100,000 Homes Campaign, uncovering critical innovations in "Housing First" models for people experiencing long-term homelessness and who are medically vulnerable. He has played a key leadership role in Project H3 VETS, Maricopa County's initiative to end chronic homelessness among Veterans.

In his previous employment as the Arizona Director for United States Veterans Initiative, the Nation's largest non-profit dedicated to the successful reintegration of homeless Veterans, Mr. Bridwell helped establish more than 200 beds of housing and services between its Phoenix and Prescott operations by using VA's Grant and Per Diem Program; Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); city and state HOME programs; and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits among other sources.

His Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, established in Phoenix, Arizona, led to "Best Practice" recognition by its funding entity, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.

Mr. Bridwell holds a Master's in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix and a Bachelor's in Social Work from Arizona State University. Also, he has served as the board Chair of the Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness and is a board member of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.

Karl Calhoun has been an executive at Volunteers of America Los Angeles, California, since 2013. Currently, he is the Director of Enterprise Development at Volunteers of America, overseeing new funding opportunities and new program initiatives for Veterans and Homeless Services.

He is an accomplished and passionate senior-level executive with more than 10 years of experience in the non-profit sector, coupled with a Master's in Clinical Psychology. He has a proven record of managing operations, multiple programs and demonstrated success developing and implementing effective programs/services for vulnerable populations, with proficiencies in leading high-performing teams and up to 25 program managers. He is an expert at addressing homelessness among emancipated former foster youth and Veterans and has extensive experience in heading both residential and transitional housing programs. He has great interest in participating in policy-making and innovative program development in the Veteran space at both the local and national levels.

Margo Ellis began her career in the U.S. Marine Corps of Engineers in 1999. Her service included a tour as a Female Engagement Team leader in Fallujah, Iraq and training the first Iraqi women security professionals. In June 2008, Margo became a Veteran advocate, working as the D.C. Regional Director for Student Veterans of America, then as a Senate Liaison for VA, where she helped negotiate passage of eight bills and an 11% increase in VA's budget to over \$125 billion.

In 2012, Margo moved to the private sector as a Vice President in the Private Bank at J.P. Morgan where she helped lead a 17% growth in revenue and 15% reduction in operating expenses for a \$165 billion line of business. In 2015, Margo began her entrepreneurial career, founding EELA Consulting providing public relations and marketing insights to help companies and nonprofits grow and scale.

Tramecia Garner, LPCC is the Chief Operating Officer and Housing Director at Swords to Plowshares in San Francisco, California. Prior to this new role, she was the Associate Director for Housing and Residential Programs since 2016. As a member of the executive-level management team, she works alongside the Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer and other senior management staff regarding agency operations, budget and strategic planning. She manages many of the agency's direct service programs, provided in Oakland and San Francisco, California, which include SSVF, Employment and Training, VA's Grant and Per Diem Service Centers, Outreach and Drop-In Case Management and Mental Health Services. She provides direct management of the various housing programs to include: Health Care for Homeless Veterans programs-DeMontfort House and Safe Haven located in San Francisco, California. She also manages six Permanent Supportive Housing sites for Veterans and their families who were formerly homeless or chronically homeless in San Francisco, California. These sites include more than 260 HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) households and 170 non-HUD-VASH units (Continuums of Care and Rental Assistance Demonstration, section 8). Also, she was directly responsible for managing the Grant and Per Diem Program (which included Special Needs Chronically Mentally Ill, Bridge Housing and Frail Elderly beds); however, it was surrendered in 2017 to increase permanent housing options for Veterans.

In addition to her leadership role within Swords to Plowshares, she is very active with local advocacy and oversight bodies such as the Continuum of Care, Veterans

Coordinated Entry Steering Committee and is currently the Co-Chair of the Supportive Housing Providers Network. In 2018, she was selected by National Alliance to End Homelessness to participate in the Trans-Atlantic Practice Exchange. As a result, she traveled to London, England, to learn about Veteran homelessness and shared her perspective and experience with providers in the United Kingdom. Ms. Garner obtained a Master's Degree in Professional Counseling and Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Georgia State University. She is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor in the State of California.

Sharon Green is a native New Yorker and retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, entrepreneur and author with more than 30 years of leadership and financial management experience. She is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Alethes Consulting Group, LLC, providing leadership coaching, speaking and training for corporate executives, non-profit organizations, Veterans and individuals globally.

As the Chief Operations Officer and Legacy Member, Women Veterans Interactive, Inc. (WVI), Sharon continues to play an active role in fulfilling the WVI mission of meeting women Veterans at their points of need through advocacy, empowerment, interaction, outreach and unification. Through Operation Safety Net, a unique WVI program that provides emergency funding to address the critical needs of women Veterans who are homeless or at-risk of being homeless, she strives to bring awareness to provide emergency funds to those in need. In conjunction with the organization's financial literacy program, she ensures that women Veterans are educated and equipped to excel beyond yesterday's economic hardships, while adapting and overcoming the new challenges presented by the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Sharon was also essential in building a proactive WVI workforce development program that is successfully equipping women for sustainable employment, while eradicating homelessness and reducing suicide among the increasing population of women Veterans.

In addition to unifying, equipping and connecting women Veterans nationally, Sharon has expanded her leadership expertise as a member of the President's Advisory Council for the more than 25,000 global member John Maxwell Team (JMT), where she is instrumental in serving the JMT tribe and facilitating innovative training that is transforming the leadership culture in the Nations of Guatemala, Paraguay and Costa Rica.

Sharon received her Army commission as a Financial Manager after graduating with honors in 1988 from Howard University, earning a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Accounting. In 1994, she earned a Master of Science in Business Administration degree from Boston University. Throughout her 23 and a half years of serving her country, she has led and held oversight of thousands of Service members and civilians, while managing pay systems and billions for the Federal Government. She is an Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)/Operation New Dawn

Veteran, having earned numerous military awards and decorations. Sharon is a member of the Association of the U.S. Army, American Society of Military Comptrollers, Military Officers Association of America, Disabled American Veterans, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and the proud mother of her teenage son, John'al.

Jeffrey Johnson has been a Registered Nurse for 5 years and has recently relocated from Central Texas to the Chicago suburbs. He currently works for Advocate Aurora Good Shepherd Hospital in Barrington, Illinois in the Emergency Department. With his trauma background stemming from his time spent in military medicine, it was an easy transition into an emergency nursing role in the hospital setting. Being in the Emergency Department, homelessness is a regularity in the patient population, Veteran's being a small portion of those individuals. Outside of the hospital, Jeff is a part of multiple Veteran's organizations and nonprofits as both a member, volunteer, and resource. He enjoys all outdoor activities, board games and movies with his family and woodworking.

Kimberly M. Mitchell is the Senior Vice President for Military and Government Affairs at the National University System (NUS). She leads the innovative outreach efforts within the NUS for military, Veteran and military family educational degree and outreach programs. Prior to her position at NUS, Kim was the Senior Vice President for Military, Veteran and Government Affairs at National University. Kim is a nationally recognized leading vocal advocate for our Service members, Veterans, military families and Gold Star Families and frequently speaks at non-profit, community, and corporate conferences in communities across the country.

Kim graduated from the Naval Academy in 1996 and served in the U.S. Navy for 17 years as a Surface Warfare Officer serving onboard surface ships and at shore commands. Her last 2 years on active duty she worked for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the Deputy Director of the Office of Warrior and Family Support. Kim has worked with hundreds of communities and has assisted thousands of organizations to find solutions to address the challenges of transition and reintegration for our Service members, Veterans and military families. After departing the Navy in 2012, she was the President and Co-Founder of Dixon Center for Military and Veterans Services and July 2017, Kim moved to San Diego to be the first non-Vietnam Veteran and first woman selected to be President and CEO of Veterans Village of San Diego (VVSD). In March 2020, she stepped down from her position at VVSD to lead National University's educational efforts providing secondary education for our service members, Veterans and their families.

Kim currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Woody Williams Foundation, Infinite Hero Foundation, Kaplan Public Service Foundation, sits on the Advisory Committee for Iraq Afghanistan Veterans of America, and is appointed to the Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans. Kim served for 2 years as a Trustee on the Board for the National

University System. She is a 2019 George W. Bush Presidential Center Stand-To Veterans Leadership Program Scholar, holds a bachelor's degree from the United States Naval Academy in Ocean Engineering and a master's degree from The George Washington University in Organizational Management. In April 2021, Kim's portrait and story were highlighted in President George W. Bush's new book, *Out of Many One: Portraits of America's Immigrants*.

Kathryn C. Monet is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV). In this role, she focuses on executing NCHV's strategic policy and technical assistance agenda, and on expanding NCHV's strategic partnerships to more effectively end Veteran homelessness.

Kathryn has spent a decade in the public and non-profit sector working to address housing instability and homelessness among Veterans. Prior to joining NCHV, she was with the National Alliance to End Homelessness focusing on the promotion of data-driven, evidence-based interventions to end homelessness, particularly among Veterans. Also, Kathryn was involved in Veteran homelessness in a legislative capacity during her time at the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. She earned a Master's in Public Administration from Villanova University and a Bachelor of Science in Diplomacy and International Relations from Seton Hall University.

Bilal Mustafa is a U.S. Navy Veteran, who possesses 13 years of experience in the fields of community organizing, case management and housing support for low-income tenants. He has worked as an on-call housing specialist with Swords to Plowshares from October 2017 to May 2018 and currently works as a Community Organizer with Swords to Plowshares in San Francisco, California. He has had exposure working with a diverse set of clients in the California State prison system, as well as having traveled to 13 different countries when he served in the military (May 1984 to March 1990). Also, he is a Certified State Chaplain for the American Muslim Community.

Abraham Thompson Jr. is a retired U.S. Army Veteran. He attended the South Carolina Public Schools and the Brooklyn Adult Academy in New York. Also, he worked in the construction field (as a Master Carpenter) for more than 40 years and served as the Veteran Council President at U.S. Vets (a transitional facility in Washington, DC) where he was a participant. In Abraham's opinion, U.S. Vets was the best thing that happened to him because it helped him to transition from a state of homelessness, helplessness and hopelessness. Currently, he resides at the Jon and Jill Conway Apartment Complex and enjoys seeing the magnificent views of the Washington, DC, Skyline spending time with fellow Veterans and preparing full course meals on special occasions.

Jessica Venegas is Principal for Strategic Partnerships with Community Solutions International. She leads the organizational efforts to effectively leverage partnerships with the public and private sector to support successful community outcomes in a lasting end to homelessness that leaves no one behind.

Community Solutions works in 84 communities in the U.S. to end homelessness for Veteran and chronic populations. It deploys neighborhood-based solutions in key communities to address housing needs, economic well-being and place making through real estate development and community organizing strategies. Jessica holds a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Community Development from Azusa Pacific University and holds graduate certificates from the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Urban Redevelopment Excellence, Duke University Center for Leadership and Public Values and Harvard Kennedy School. She splits her time between Washington, DC and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Brandon L. Wilson is currently serving as the Director of Veterans Services of the Carolinas with Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry. His duties include the oversight of six Federal and State grants supporting Veterans and their families in 74 counties across North Carolina. This \$5 million portfolio include: SSVF, a VA housing program addressing homelessness; Homeless Veteran Re-integration Program, an employment program from DOL designed to support Veterans in transition from homelessness to the workforce; Healing Outreach Partnership for Empowerment, a program aimed at intensive outreach to the homeless population that struggles with mental illness/substance abuse from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. In addition, Brandon spearheads NC Serves, the state's first service coordination platform for Veteran Service members and their families, utilizing a shared web-based platform with both public and private partners addressing over 20 human service needs. Prior to these roles, Brandon held numerous positions with the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, to include Regional Veteran Service Officer, State Training Coordinator and Deputy Director of the North Carolina Division of Veteran Affairs (NCDVA). During his time in Raleigh, Brandon served on the NCDVA Senior Leadership Team and was instrumental in the creation of the NC4Vets Resource Guide, as well as the transformation and restructure of the agency and establishment of a new North Carolina cabinet level agency of Military and Veterans Affairs. As the State Training Coordinator, Brandon developed a new training platform for Veteran Service Organizations, which lead to a 42% increase in fully developed claims, leading to the growth of North Carolina's Veteran portfolio by over \$1.2 billion; the fastest growth rate of VA claims in the United States in 2015. He began his career as the Director of Veterans Services with Haywood County in 2009.

Brandon is a combat Marine, who served in the infantry during OIF. He has served as an advisor to many local and state Veterans committees to North Carolina State Veterans Commission, North Carolina Veterans Council and North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness. He currently serves on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration State committee for Veterans and the State Consumer and Family Advisory Committee, an advisory board to the Secretary of North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Brandon is also an active member of the Waynesville Rotary Club and Sunday School Director at Allen's Creek Baptist

Church. Brandon lives in Waynesville, North Carolina, with his wife, Sara, and their two daughters, Daisy and Anna.

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
Committee Support Staff and Ex-Officio Members**

Committee Support Staff

Leisa Davis, VA, is the Designated Federal Officer for the Committee and serves as a Program Analyst, VA, Homeless Program Office.

Heather Monroe, VA, is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-VA Supportive Housing Social Worker, Veterans Health Administration.

Holly Hirsel, VA, is the Senior Community Engagement Coordinator, National Call Center for Homeless Veterans Liaison, VA, Homeless Program Office.

Ex-Officio Members

Detra Giles, VA, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), is the Assistant Director of Outreach, Office of Field Operations, Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement.

John McLaughlin, Ed.D., U.S. Department of Education is a Federal Contractor, Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program.

Emily Rosenoff, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is the Director, Division of Long-Term Care Policy, HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

Norm Suchar, HUD, is the Director, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs.

Ivan Denton, U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is the Director of the Office of National Programs and oversees the DOL VETS programs, among others.

Anthony Love, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, Interim Executive Director.

William B. Ashton, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Military Veteran Agricultural Liaison for USDA.

Yashika D. Neaves, U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), Policy & Communication Strategist for DoD's Military-Civilian Transition Office, under the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Greg Crawford, U.S. Department of Justice, Correctional Program Specialist at the National Institute of Corrections.