

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HOMELESS VETERANS
to the Department of Veterans Affairs
SUMMARY OF MEETING**

May 13, 2017

The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans was convened for its first meeting of fiscal year (FY) 2017 at 8:00 am on May 10, 2017 through May 12, 2017 in the offices of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington DC and the American Legion Conference Room, 608 K Street NW, Washington, DC. Mark Johnston, Committee Chairman opened the meeting.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on May 10, 2017; from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm on May 11, 2017; and from 8:00 am to 10:30 am on May 12, 2017. In addition to being made available to the public in person, the meeting was made available to the public via open conference call. Signage was publicly posted in the lobby directing visitors them to the meeting location. There were no discussions that required the meeting to be closed to the public, with the exception of purely administrative discussions.

Committee members present:

Mark Johnston – Chair
Steven Como – Member
Margarita Devlin – Ex-Officio Member, Veteran Benefits Administration
Eric Grumdahl - Member
Dottie Guy – Member
Charles Hall – Member
Elisha Harig-Blain - Member
Peter Kelleher - Member
Susan Lee, Ph.D, RN – Member
Ann Oliva – Ex-Officio Member, Housing and Urban Development
Emily Rosenoff – Ex-Officio Member, Health and Human Services
Sam Shellenberger – Ex-Officio Member, Department of Labor
Leon Winston - Member
Roger Woodworth – Member
Matthew Doherty – Ex-Officio Member, United States Interagency Council on Homeless

Committee Support Staff

Anthony Love, Senior Advisor and Director Community Engagement, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Homeless Programs Office (HPO), Designated Federal Officer
Charles Selby, VA, Senior Advisor and Communication and Engagement Coordinator, VHA Homeless Programs Office, Alternate DFO
Alexandra Logsdon, Presidential Management Fellow, VHA Homeless Programs, Committee Support
Timothy Underwood, Presidential Management Fellow, VHA Homeless Programs, Committee Support

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Additional attendees present for a portion or all of the meeting (alphabetically by last name):

Scott Blackburn, VA, Interim Deputy Secretary
Jelessa Burney, Advisory Committee Management Office (ACMO)
Craig Burnette, former member ACHV
Eileen Devine, VA, Director, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans, VHA HPO
Anne Dunn, VA, Acting Executive Director, VHA HPO
Dr. Keith Harris, VA, Director, Clinical Operations, VHA HPO
Kenneth Fennel, DOL VETS HVRP Program Manager
Erin Gittens, VA, Program Analyst, VBA Veteran Engagement
John Kuhn, VA, Director, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), VHA HPO
*Heidi Marston, VA, Special Assistant, VHA
Phil Landis, former member, ACHV
Kathryn Monet, Executive Director, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV)
Jeffrey Moragne, VA, Director, ACMO
Mary O'Malley, VA, Acting Finance, Director, VHA HPO
* Dr. Thomas O'Toole, VA, Director, National Center on Homelessness among Veterans, VHA Homeless Programs
Nan Roman, Executive Director, National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH)
Adam RuegeVA, VHA Homeless Program Operations Liaison
* Jeff Quarles, VA, National Director, VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Programs
Beth Sandor, Director, Zero: 2016, Community Solutions
Norm Suchar, Director of SNAP, HUD
*Marcy Thompson, Special Assistant, HUD
Jessica Venegas, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Community Solutions
Dr. Saul Weiner, VA, Deputy Director, VHA National Center of Innovation for Complex Chronic Healthcare

* Indicates participation via teleconference

For the record, it is noted that to avoid a conflict of interest, Committee members are required to absent themselves from the meeting when the Committee discusses applications from their respective institutions or in which a conflict of interest may occur. Members are asked to sign a statement to this effect. This does not apply to "en bloc" actions. There were no discussions during this gathering that required any members to absent themselves from the meeting.

Wednesday May 10, 2017 (Conference Room 530, VA Headquarters, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC):

8:00 am Meeting called to order by Mark Johnston, Chairman.

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- 09:00 am Discussion with Anthony Love, Designated Federal Officer, on outcomes of previous ACHV report and letters.
- 09:20 am Discussion with Anne Dunn, Acting Executive Director, VHA HPO, on the future of VA Homeless programs. [**Committee Requests: Elisha Harig-Blaine asks for VHA HPO charts and budget documents.** Committee Chairman concurs and asks if it can be provided by end of day. **Peter Kelleher requests historical information on VHA HPO.** Acting Director concurs and directs DFO to obtain and share documents.]
- 10:00 am Discussion with Heidi Marston, Special Assistant, VA (remote) on progress in Los Angeles since the ACHV's previous meeting held in Los Angeles in August 2016 with. [**Committee requests: Eric GrumdaHL requests a copy of the timeline for the new housing being built.** Ms. Marston agrees to forward the requested information.]
- 10:40 am Break
- 10:50 am Discussion with Jeffrey Moragne, Director, Advisory Committee Management Office on Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) guidelines, VA Advisory Committee Management policies, and SMART Recommendations.
- 11:15 am Ethics Briefing by Carol Borden, Office of General Counsel – “What is and is not allowed for Advisory Committee Members.”
- 11:50 am Break for lunch.
- 1:00 pm Discussion with Matthew Doherty, Executive Director, United States Interagency Council on Homeless on Federal efforts to end homelessness, Progress and Future of Mayors Challenge, and update on communities that have effectively ended Veteran homelessness to include messaging to communities that still have not reached the goal. Discussion on goals of USICH to include the work of preventing and ending Veteran homelessness while sustaining the gains.
- 1:45 pm Open discussion on various matters by the committee regarding points made during the day.
- 2:00 pm Break
- 2:15 pm Discussion with Adam Ruege, VHA Homeless Program Operations Liaison (remote) on the subject of: “How can we make a more

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standardized application of VA Homeless Program Policies?" Open discussion of building better processes.

- 3:00 pm Discussion with Veterans Affairs Interim Deputy Secretary (IDS) Scott Blackburn, on VA transformation and homeless programs future.
[Committee requests and comments: Dottie Guy asks for statistics on differences on the rates of appeals between male and female Veterans. IDS Blackburn agrees to look into it, and also suggests we get Veterans Benefits Administration to brief on claims process.] Mark Johnson suggests that it is critical to select a permanent leader for VHA Homeless Programs. Eric Grumdahl suggests that it is critical that VA maintain its leadership in ending homelessness by making additional public facing statements that ending Veteran homelessness is a continued priority. IDS Blackburn agrees and asks for assistance from the ACHV in the form of focused suggestions and counsel. Sam Shellenberger, Department of Labor suggests that VA can and should fill the impending void in interagency cooperation that will be left when USICH sunsets. Also, in order to maintain an all-volunteer military force, employment and housing for Veterans is critical. VA can play a key role in leading inter-agency efforts on employment and housing. IDS Blackburn concurs. **Peter Kelleher asks if VA metrics can be shared.** IDS Blackburn has a document called the VA Snapshot which he shares with VA leaders on various metrics. He agrees that the document can be shared with the Committee members once it has been compiled into a public facing document. Charlie Hall asks if there are future efforts to partner with public health care agencies beyond Choice. IDS Blackburn states that VA is pursuing partnerships that foster building a "High Performing Network." This effort is on-going and a part of the Secretary's transformation efforts. Committee notes that Los Angeles has seen a large decrease in Veteran homelessness and that there are 1200 units of housing coming online, but wants to know what VA's landlord engagement strategy is. Question deferred to Dr. Keith Harris. Dr. Harris describes city and county efforts, but observes that VA does not have authority to engage in this type of effort, but supports it through our role as members of the Continuum of Care. Committee asks if VA can do a "kicker" fund. IDS Blackburn appreciates the suggestion and looks forward to it being included in the committee recommendations and believes that a partnership effort would be the best vehicle.]
- 4:05 pm Update on transformation and next steps of the VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD) with Anne Dunn, Acting Executive Director, HPO, VA.

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4:30 pm	Discussion with Margarita Devlin, Executive Director of Benefits Assistance Service, VBA on expediting homeless claims and VBA efforts to support preventing and ending Veteran homelessness. [Committee requests: Ann Oliva, HUD asks for VBA data by zip code on claims to assist in forecasting inflow of homeless Veterans.] Ms. Devlin agrees to provide the data.] Peter Kelleher suggests that VBA publically endorse the practice of encouraging Veterans to seek pro-bono legal assistance with appeals. Ms. Devlin mentions that there is a new process regarding appeals in development. Homeless Veterans can request the Board of Appeals move their case forward due to financial hardship. The homeless Veteran Coordinators in the Regional Offices can assist and VBA is working on developing guidance.
4:55 pm	Open discussion on various subjects raised earlier in the day. Eric Grumdahl suggests the Committee consider writing an immediate letter encouraging the Secretary to fill the vacancy of the Executive Director for VHA Homeless Programs and to consider making an affirmative statement of support for continuing USICH.
5:10 pm	Committee adjourned for the day.

Thursday May 11, 2017 (Main Conference Room, American Legion Headquarters, 1608 K Street NW, Washington, DC)

8:20 am	Meeting called to order by Mark Johnston, Chairman. Open discussion on yesterday's activities and today's agenda.
8:30 am	Combined presentation from the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) on future actions and policies related to Veteran homelessness with Kathryn Monet, Executive Director, NCHV and Nan Roman, Executive Director, NAEH.

Ms. Monet of NCHV suggests that the following issues should be considered by the Committee in their next report and other messages to the Secretary of VA:

- VA should widely broadcast consistent messaging related to VA's continued commitment to ending Veteran homelessness. VA plays a key leadership role in ending homelessness and there are many communities who are unsure as to what VA's future efforts will be.
- Appoint a permanent leader for VA Homeless Programs. The interim leaders have done a fantastic job, but not having a permanent leader creates uncertainty and risks delays in making key policy decisions.

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- Focus on Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), prioritize funding by community need, and do more of what VA did in LA – appoint a leadership with committed focus and a mandate to get results with direct support from VA senior leaders. Think about communities where we aren't making progress and reach out to them to enhance focus.
- VA has new authorities allowing for broad changes to the Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program. NCHV desires to work closely in partnership with VA to help shape how those changes are implemented. Committee member Robert Shriver suggests that as part of the changes in VA policy that there be a renewed and increased commitment to work with local government.

Ms. Roman of NAEH requests VA to be more engaged on public facing messaging about VA's commitment to end homelessness. She also suggests that the Veteran community needs screening at separation and needs to link at-risk veterans to resources. Other suggestions made by Ms. Roman were: VA start contracting for HUD-VASH case management.; the National Center on homeless Veterans distribute their reports more widely; SECVA appoint a leader for homeless programs, and that he speak publicly on VA's commitment to homeless Veterans; and, VA work more closely with DoD. Mr. Johnston and Mr. Shriver agreed that DoD handoff does not seem effective. Committee suggests increased focus on diversion.

9:15 am	Discussion on VA Grant Programs and how mainstream benefits are currently incorporated into VA grant programs and how the committee can assist them with recommendations to improve the process going forward with John Kuhn, Director, SSVF (remote) and Anne Dunn, Acting Executive Director, HPO, VA. The Committee members encouraged VA to continue to use training opportunities such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Social Security Disability/Supplemental Security IncomeSSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery Technical Assistance (SOAR TA) and other efforts to help link Veterans to mainstream services. They also emphasized the importance of the SSVF program and encouraged VA to support continued funding of SSVF (SSVF funding is determined by Congress, not VA.)
10:00 am	Break
10:15 am	Discussion with Ann Oliva, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on what HUD programs support the effort to prevent and end Veteran homelessness and how to better integrate with VA programs. In response to questions

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regarding what common challenges are faced by Continuums of Care (CoCs), Ms. Oliva stated that stand alone rural CoCs tend to face numerous challenges due to limited resources and transportation challenges. The Committee makes note, but no immediately apparent solutions are raised. All parties in the meeting agree that this is an ongoing challenge, which has received a lot of focus, but for which no effective solutions have been found.

- 11:00 am Discussion with Sam Shellenberger, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations, Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS), Department of Labor (DOL) and Ivan Denton, Director, Office of National Programs, DOL VETS, on what DOL programs support the effort to prevent and end Veteran homelessness and DOL can better integrate with VA programs. There is discussion among many members whether or not there is duplication of services between VA's Community Employment Coordinators and DOL's various homeless programs, but no definitive judgements are made. Mr. Denton opines that collectively, we need to work on getting average wage for initial placements of formerly homeless Veterans above the current average of \$12.19. Anthony Love asks if being homeless in itself constitutes a barrier to gaining employment. Mr. Denton agrees that it is, and is working on efforts to get it added to the DOL definitions of barriers. Other observations offered by Mr. Denton include: the ability to obtain meaningful employment post-military service is essential to maintaining an all volunteer force; and unemployment among Veterans might be a risk factor for suicide board and perhaps suicide prevention should be a component of homeless programs. Mr. Harig-Blaine suggests that both DOL and VA funding is not consistent with goal of ending homelessness. Mr. Johnson suggests that trying to engage the mainstream for employment would be a force multiplier.
- 11:30 am Break for lunch.
- 12:30 pm Discussion with Sabrina Clark, Director, Voluntary Service, VA on the role of VA Volunteer Services within VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) and how can they better integrate with VHA Homeless Programs. Mr. Grumdahl observed, and Ms. Clark agreed, that ending homelessness is most efficient when it is partnership driven, but are concerned that many organizations remain "siloed" in respect to volunteers. As such the CoCs may be hindered in their ability to allow volunteers to be integrated other than in the Point-In-Time Counts.
- 1:00 pm Discussion with Emily Rosenoff, Acting Director, Division of Long-Term Care Policy, HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) on which HHS programs support the effort to prevent

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and end Veteran homelessness and how HHS can better integrate with VA programs. Ms. Rosenoff and the Committee members observed that there is a critical unmet need for housing for Veterans with severe mental illness. There is essentially nothing for them, yet they are particularly vulnerable.

- 1:30 pm Discussion with Christina Dukes, Federal Liaison National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), Department of Education (ED) on which ED programs support the effort to prevent and end Veteran homelessness and how ED programs can better integrate with VA programs. Much of the subsequent discussion focuses on how Veteran status of the parents as a data element with ED programs could be collected. Mr. Harig-Blaine observed that this is a baseline year for including youth status in the Point-In-Time count. There is also discussion among VA and ED staff about the possibility of joint webinars related to linking students with Veteran parents to services.
- 2:00 pm Report by Beth Sandor, Director, Built for Zero, Community Solutions; and Jessica Venegas, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Community Solutions on “Zero: 2016” and “Built for Zero” and the overall future approach for these programs. Ms. Sandor commented that one of the most significant problems observed during the effort was that Federal agencies rely on the Point-In-Time Count as a primary data source, whereas a common element among all communities which have been successful is that they relied on by-name lists which were updated in real-time. She and the committee members agreed that policy changes at HUD and VA should be pursued that move the Federal government away from Point In-Time data to shared, real-time, by-name lists.
- 2:20 pm Break.
- 2:30 pm Discussion with Tom O’Toole, Director, VHA National Center on Homelessness among Veterans on research and development current efforts and projected future efforts, along with how ACHV might help. Mr. Two key points discussed are that recent studies have shown that food insecurity can be as high as 50% in some Veteran populations and that the ability to find and maintain employment is a critical element in ending homelessness. Mr. Johnson suggests that the Center should make its excellent research more widely available than the current locations which are largely medical and scholarly journals.
- 3:15 pm Discussion with Dr. Saul Weiner, Deputy Director, VHA National Center of Innovation for Complex Chronic Healthcare on process improvement efforts, specifically the recent Unannounced Standardized Veteran Effort.

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This is an evolving effort, and the current results have not been finalized for release. The results will be provided to the Committee at some point in the future.

- 3:45 pm Discussion with Norm Suchar, Director, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) Director, HUD & Eileen Devine, Director, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans, VA Homeless Program Office (remote) on Coordinated Entry. Discussion focusses on previous guidance HUD has released on Coordinated Entry and measured outcomes and future guidance for VHA staff. A major point of discussion is that coordinated entry is proven to increase effectiveness of homeless prevention efforts, but that the development of effective coordinated entry systems is hindered by an inability to share data between VA's Homeless Operations and Management Enterprise System (HOMES) and the various HUD Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS.) All parties in the discussion agree that data sharing is an essential element of coordinated entry and that data sharing must be enabled soon. VA is working on data sharing tools, but does not have a definite timeline for when they will be complete.
- 4:30 pm Committee deliberations on possible recommendations for annual report and discussion of interagency sub-committees.
- 4:45pm Committee adjourned for the day.

Friday May 12, 2017 (Conference Room 530, VA Headquarters, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC):

- 9:00 am Meeting called to order by Mark Johnston, Chairman.
- 9:10 am Open discussion recapping previous day's briefings.
- 9:45 am Committee develops outline and recommendations for next report.
- 11:00 am Identify locations and times of meetings for the next three years.
- 12:00 am Meeting adjourned by Mark Johnston, Chairman.

SUMMARY OF VOTES:

- 1. VOTE – Unanimous, that the meeting will take place in Nashua, NH. Committee proposes FY 2018 meetings in Washington, DC and Tampa, FL. Committee proposes FY 2019 meetings in Washington, DC and Birmingham, AL.**

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SUMMARY OF REQUESTS:

1. Elisha Harig-Blaine asks for VHA HPO charts and budget documents.
2. Peter Kelleher requests historical information on VHA HPO.
3. Eric GrumdaHL requests a copy of the timeline for the new housing being built in Los Angeles.
4. Dottie Guy asks for statistics on differences on the rates of appeals between male and female Veterans.
5. Peter Kelleher asks if VA metrics can be shared.
6. Ann Oliva, HUD asks for VBA data by zip code on claims to assist in forecasting inflow of homeless Veterans

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 am on May 12, 2017.

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



Mark Johnston
Chairman
Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans

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