

Office Hours: Permanent Housing Placement National Challenge to House 38,000 Veterans

VHA Homeless Programs Office – July 08, 2022

Centering Equity in Housing Surges

Agenda

- Equity Grounding and Purpose
- Targeted Universalism
- Applying Targeted Universalism in Housing Surges
- Meaningful Partnerships with Veterans with Lived Experiences and Expertise
- Strategy to Address Disparities and Incorporate Equity: Data Informed Practices
- VHA Homeless Programs Racial Equity Dashboard
- Q&A

Equity Grounding and Purpose

- Importance of Leading with Racial Equity and Social Justice:
 - Health outcomes, social and economic well-being are influenced by race in the U.S.
 - To end homelessness and address inequity within homelessness, we must build systems with targeted strategies that are responsive all populations, including Black, Indigenous, Latina/o/x, People of Color, and other populations/identities who are most impacted by racial and social injustices.

Targeted Universalism

Why Use the Targeted Universalism Framework?

- With targeted universalism, we recognize that different groups need different supports to achieve universal goals.

The Targeted Universalism Framework's Five Steps

1. Define a Universal Goal
2. Measure the Overall Population
3. Measure Population Segments
4. Understand Group-based Factors
5. Implement Targeted Strategies

Targeted Universalism Scenario Example

1. Define a Universal Goal: Goal: Increase the rate of Veterans, who enter Permanent Housing within 90 days of first contact with the Veteran Homeless Response system.
2. Measure the Overall Population: 65% of Veterans enter Permanent Housing within 90 days of first contact with the Veteran Homeless Response System.
3. Measure Population Segments: 15% of Veterans who identify as Black/African American enter Permanent Housing within 90 days of first contact with the Veteran Homeless Response System. 50% difference for Veterans who identify as Black/African American.
4. Understand Group-based Factors
 - **Partner with Veterans with lived experiences and expertise** to understand the factors contributing to this - e.g., criminal histories and/or housing discrimination - landlords not accepting applications or steering Veterans who identify as Black/African American to less desirable neighborhoods/units.
 - **Take a deeper dive into your data to look for trends-** e.g., are some landlords denying all applicants from certain groups, e.g., Black/African American, or are referrals for placements differing by zip codes for different populations?
 - **Expand your partnerships to better address**, if needed- e.g., pull in housing advocacy groups, landlord recruitment and retention leads, local legal partners, PHA staff, CoC staff and non-traditional partners.
5. Implement Targeted Strategies
 - **Collaboration: Develop cross-sector coordination** with other key partners to address systemic barriers.
 - **Training: Make staff aware of the disparities** and provide equity, cultural humility, and advocacy training to all staff to help monitor for/address these disparities.
 - **Strategic Planning: Monitor for intended and unintended outcomes** as the new strategies are implemented. E.g., broadening landlord recruitment and retention efforts across all zip codes with an active, transparent monitoring/accountability system for placements by landlords. **Create new policies to support**, as needed.

Applying Targeted Universalism in Housing Surges

Centering Equity While Moving with Urgency

- Accelerating placements is critical to ending homelessness among Veterans.
- However, without careful attention, the acceleration can create or exacerbate disparities among Black, Indigenous, People of Color and other vulnerable populations (i.e., Veterans with the most significant barriers to housing placement due to historic and systemic racism and discrimination).

Strategies to Address Disparities and Incorporate Equity

- Provide training and support to staff in equity practices, implicit and explicit bias, Housing First and Trauma Informed Care.

- Seek feedback and program design support from partners, especially Veterans with lived experiences of homelessness.
- Intentionally partner with Veterans who are reflective of the community served
- Proactively outreach and engage Veterans with higher vulnerabilities, including those with past histories in institutional care or criminal justice involvement, those who are unsheltered and/or those with the longest histories of homelessness.
- Use VA's racial equity tools, reports, and dashboards, as well as HMIS data, to identify areas for improvement and adjust programs accordingly to address these disparities.
- Approach work with equity from a continuous quality improvement process lens.

Strategies to Address Disparities and Incorporate Equity: Veterans with Lived Experiences and Expertise

The Voices of Veterans with Lived Experiences and Expertise

- “Alleviating suffering of the most marginalized communities must begin with assessing the needs of entire communities and allowing the most marginalized to lead the strategy. My belief is those closest to the pain are closest to the solution.” - Linda Sarsour, Co-Chair of 2017 Women's March

Key Considerations for Successful Partnerships

- Veterans with lived experiences and expertise of homelessness should:
 - Be compensated for their time and contributions. This includes providing meals, transportation, Wifi, and other technology that allows for full participation.
 - Have the necessary resources dedicated to make the partnership successful (i.e., budget, staff time, space). Ensure reminder calls, and adequate staff support. Be mindful of the emotional labor and resources this support requires.
- [Beyond Mere Principle: Strategies for Truly Partnering with People who Have the Lived Experience in our Work | United States Interagency Council on Homelessness \(USICH\)](#)

Strategies to Address Disparities and Incorporate Equity: Data Informed Practices

Data-Informed Practices

- Track data, in a disaggregated fashion, both quantitatively and qualitatively.
- Use data to identify system bottlenecks that can be addressed to expedite housing interventions while ensuring clarity for the Veteran and service providers (coordinated care and warm hand-offs).
- Create improvement goals for different housing milestones and pathways.
 - E.g., decrease the time from HUD-VASH admission to voucher issuance.
- Break down data, e.g., housing referrals and placements, by demographics to understand disparities and prevent or address inequities.
 - E.g., a community identified that Veterans, who have at least one child, were increasing income at a slower rate and intentionally partnered with employment resources and childcare resources to address.
- Review progress at regular intervals.
 - Consider reviewing bi-weekly.

- Socialize the VHA Homeless Programs Racial Equity Dashboard.

Additional Resources

- [Setting the Foundation for Racial Equity Across all HPO Programs and Services - VA Homeless Programs](#)
- [HUD COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Data & Equity: Using the Data You Have](#)
- [COVID-19 Homeless System Response: 5 Tips for Approaching Rehousing with Racial Equity](#)
- [COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Part 1: Equity as the Foundation](#)
- [HUD Landlord Engagement Resources](#)
- [Housing Surges: Special Considerations for Targeting People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness](#)
- [Honolulu Housing Fair Video](#)