



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Background Information Document
VA Homeless Veterans Program
VIRTUAL EDITORIAL ROUNDTABLE**

Working Together to End Veteran Homelessness - One Job at a Time.

The United States (U.S.) Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has made ending homelessness among Veterans a top priority, undertaking an unprecedented campaign to dramatically increase successful outcomes for Veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Our goal is a systematic end to homelessness, which means there are no Veterans sleeping on our streets and every Veteran has access to permanent housing. Should Veterans become or be at-risk of becoming homeless, we will have the capacity to quickly connect them to the help they need to achieve housing stability. The ultimate goal is that all Veterans have permanent, sustainable housing with access to high-quality health care and other supportive services.

To meet this challenge, VA launched a comprehensive, evidence-based and outcome-driven strategy consistent with the first ever federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, which was developed in May 2010.

VA together with our federal, state, and local partners, has made steady progress toward preventing and eliminating homelessness among Veterans. The 2014 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, prepared by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), estimates there were 49,933 homeless Veterans on a single night in January 2014 in the United States. There has been a 33 percent reduction in Veteran homelessness since the initiative began in 2010. The 2015 PIT Count data will be available later this year.

Strong interagency collaboration is resulting in successful policies and programs such as Housing First in the Community (Housing First), Rapid Re-Housing, HUD-VASH and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF). These programs have been critical to achieving the reduction thus far.

We have broadly expanded the array of services and supports aimed at identifying, interceding and rapidly engaging these Veterans in housing, clinical care and social services, as well as resources aimed at preventing homelessness from occurring. As a result of these investments, in fiscal year (FY) 2014 alone, VA provided services to more than 260,000 homeless or at-risk Veterans through the Veteran Health Administration's (VHA's) specialized homeless programs. The needs of these Veterans varied and not all required an intensive homeless program intervention, but for those who did require a more intensive intervention, more than 72,500 Veterans were either placed in permanent housing or prevented from becoming homeless. When we include their family members, that number rises to over 100,000.

VA is now working to forge new partnerships that yield more affordable housing units set aside for Veterans experiencing homelessness, and to forge new partnerships that yield more stable, meaningful jobs for Veterans.

VA is the Nation's largest single provider of homeless treatment and benefits assistance services to Veterans and their families who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. We continue to increase our support to Veterans and their family members who are homeless or are at-risk of becoming homeless. Ending Veteran homelessness is achievable, but doing so is possible only with continued investments in effective interventions.

Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCES)

In order to help improve employment outcomes and reach the most difficult to serve Veterans who are homeless, in the third quarter of FY 2014 each VA Medical Center (VAMC) received funding to hire new Vocational Development Specialists (VDS) who will serve as Community Employment Coordinators



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(CEC) within the Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCEs) framework. The new CECs are responsible for the ongoing orientation and training of the Homeless Services continuum and for providing direct assistance in connecting Veterans to the most appropriate and least restrictive VA and/or community-based employment service leading to competitive employment with appropriate supports.

Program Highlights:

- Partnered with the Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA) to implement the VBA Homeless Veteran Employment Program to hire 40 homeless/formerly homeless Veterans during FY 2015 as File Clerks and/or Claims Assistants in VBA Regional Offices across the country. In September 2014, the first Veteran was accepted for this program.
- Partnered with Veteran Canteen Service (VCS) to implement the VCS Homeless Veteran Employment Program to hire homeless Veterans at multiple locations nationally as food services workers and retail store clerks. Two pilot sites were identified for this program; Seattle and Greater Los Angeles. Local VCS and CEC teams have been developed and Veterans have been hired.

For more information, please visit: http://www.va.gov/homeless/employment_programs.asp.

Housing and Urban Development - Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program

A collaborative program between HUD and VA where eligible homeless Veterans receive a Housing Choice rental voucher from HUD, paired with VA providing case management and supportive services to sustain housing stability and recovery from physical and mental health problems, substance use disorders and functional concerns contributing to or resulting from homelessness. HUD-VASH subscribes to the principles of the "Housing First" model of care. Housing First is an evidence based practice model that has demonstrated rapidly moving individuals into housing, and then wrapping supportive services around them as needed, helps homeless individuals exit from homelessness, remain stable in housing and thus improve their ability and motivation to engage in treatment strategies. Program goals include housing stability while promoting maximum Veteran recovery and independence in the community for the Veteran and the Veteran's family.

Program Highlights:

- Through the end of FY 2014, a total of 58,135 vouchers have been allocated for use in the HUD-VASH program.
- 51,913 Veterans were housed through HUD-VASH as of September 30, 2014.
- Funding for an additional 10,251 tenant based Housing Choice Vouchers in FY 2014 were awarded in two rounds in the beginning of FY 2015.
 - Round One vouchers were released on October 1, 2014. There were a total of 8,276 tenant-based vouchers and 730 project-based vouchers were released.
 - Round Two vouchers were released December 8, 2014. There was a total of 984 tenant based vouchers.
- An additional 1,627 project-based Housing Choice Vouchers were awarded through a Public and Indian Housing (PIH) Notice. Of these, 929 vouchers are expected to be active by the end of FY 2015.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp>.



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Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

This program was authorized by Public Law 110-387 and provides supportive services to very low-income Veteran families in or transitioning to permanent housing. SSVF is designed to rapidly re-house homeless Veteran families and prevent homelessness for those at imminent risk due to a housing crisis. Funds are granted to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that will assist very low-income Veteran families by providing a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability.

Program Highlights:

- In FY 2014, the SSVF program awarded \$507 million in grants allowing SSVF to expand from 319 community agencies to 383 community agencies that serve all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam and the Virgin Islands.
- In FY 2014, SSVF assisted more than 123,300 individuals exceeding the annual projection of 115,000.
- SSVF has created a significant impact on Veteran families with over 27,450 children assisted in FY 2014.
- Of the nearly 77,700 Veteran participants, over 11,300 or 15 percent, are women.
- In FY 2014, 81 percent of those discharged from the SSVF program obtained permanent housing.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp>.

Contact Us

To find the VA facility nearest to you, please visit: <http://www1.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp>

More detailed information on all of VA's Programs for Homeless Veterans can be found on the internet at <http://www.va.gov/homeless>.

If you, or a Veteran you know, are at-risk of homelessness contact VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838) to speak to a trained VA responder.