



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20410-0001

THE SECRETARY

February 14, 2012

Dear Philanthropic Partners:

Across the country, veterans of our armed forces are becoming homeless at a higher rate than the civilian population at large. Sadly, this is consistent with a history of overrepresentation of veterans among those experiencing homelessness. It is unacceptable that these men and women, who have dedicated their lives to protecting our freedom and our homes and who often bear the visible and invisible scars of battle, are sleeping on the streets and in shelters.

In response, the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs (VA) have each committed to ending homelessness among veterans by 2015. Central to achieving this goal is HUD-VASH, a jointly administered supportive housing program to permanently house veterans, and provide them with services and support. In 2012, this program will begin a pilot project to house 700 of the most vulnerable veterans, in these locations:

- Boston
- Chicago
- Dallas
- Denver
- Detroit
- District of Columbia
- Los Angeles
- New York City
- New York State
- New Orleans
- Philadelphia
- Portland, Oregon
- San Francisco
- Tampa Bay

This pilot, which is unprecedented, combines the Housing First model with the HUD-VASH program that is being administered by public housing agencies in partnership with the VA in these cities. Pathways to Housing, as the originator of the model, has been selected to provide training and technical assistance to the 14 sites and to guide the VA through successful implementation. Housing First is an effective, evidence-based intervention that meets the needs of veterans who are both homeless and have complex needs—whether psychiatric disabilities, post-traumatic stress disorder, addiction, and/or other barriers to housing—and supports them in obtaining immediate access to housing. Once housed, the veteran receives comprehensive support and treatment services so that he or she can make long-lasting strides to recovery.

HUD and other federal agencies recognize the Housing First approach developed by Pathways to Housing, a nonprofit organization, as a model program that is person-centered, results-driven, cost-effective, and accountable. It has consistently been shown to end chronic homelessness for 85-to-90 percent of participants and prevent recurrence of homelessness that is so common for formerly homeless individuals. In rolling out this new pilot project, the VA is making a major systemic shift toward adopting the highly effective Housing First model for ending homelessness.

Through this important initiative, HUD and the VA will provide the core funding for housing and services for homeless veterans. However, Congress has not appropriated funds for several key requirements including:

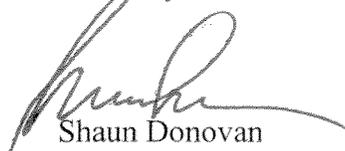
- **Establishing tenancy:** including security and utility deposits.
- **Apartment furnishings:** including furniture, cooking utensils, and household supplies.

Unmet needs like these can extend the time it takes to move a homeless veteran into an apartment by weeks or even months. Funders Together to End Homelessness (Funders Together), a national collaboration of funders committed to harnessing philanthropy's potential to help end homelessness in America, has proposed raising the necessary support for budget items that are not covered under the current HUD-VASH program. Funders Together will not be transferring the funds to HUD or the VA, but will implement an "aligned funding" model whereby the additional support will go directly to key partners on the front lines.

The pilot shows that an unprecedented level of cooperation and interagency coordination can remove many of the roadblocks to ending homelessness that currently exist at the federal level. Successful implementation of the HUD-VASH Housing First demonstration project for veterans will prove to the American people the efficacy of this model in ending veteran homelessness. It will provide evidence of the value of interagency cooperation, while also establishing expertise and champions of the model within the VA and HUD. Investment by the philanthropic sector in this program will serve as a model for future private and public sector cooperation. HUD's Office for International and Philanthropic Innovation will be working with our philanthropic partners to disseminate more information on HUD-VASH and can be contacted at ipiinfo@huduser.org.

Together, we can ensure that every veteran in this pilot project is housed quickly and effectively in a place to call home. We can end veteran homelessness in 14 high-priority communities, and we can do it in the next 3 years. This effort by Funders Together is a key step in the process forward. HUD would like to thank the collaborative philanthropic effort of Funders Together and its enthusiastic support of HUD's mission to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all.

Sincerely,



Shaun Donovan