

2023 VA Permanent Housing Conference Dallas, Texas

Coordinated Outreach and Access to Emergency Services

Agenda



System basics: getting the lay of the land in your community



Community Presentation: Volunteers of America Los Angeles



Community Presentation: VA Eastern Colorado Healthcare System

Who is in the room?

- **SSVF Staff**
- **HUD-VASH Staff**
- **VA leadership**

Show of Hands!

How long have you been providing services to Veterans?

Less than 6 months

6 months – 1 year

1 – 3 years

3 years +

System Basics: What is Coordinated Outreach?

System-Wide Infrastructure to Support Engagement with Veterans

- **Street Outreach** - a systematic, coordinated process to identify households (including Veterans), who are unsheltered or exiting institutions, to engage them around interim and permanent housing based on needs and wants.
- **Coordinated Entry (CE)**– required process to identify, assess, prioritize and match people experiencing homelessness to crisis response and permanent housing programs.
- **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)** - required web-based data collection system that gathers data on people experiencing homelessness as they move through programs and the system. Used to identify areas for performance improvement.
- **Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System (HOMES)** - the online data collection system that tracks homeless Veterans as they move through VA's system of care.

Core Elements of Coordinated Outreach

- **Coordinated Outreach is Systematic**

Requires collaboration between agencies and stakeholders- outreach is conducted on *behalf* of the community rather than one *agency*.

- Street outreach is coordinated among providers- various providers with multiple funding streams engage in street outreach, coordination makes these efforts successful and outcomes positive for those being served.
- All street outreach contacts and housing placements are shared- this can be in HMIS, other data systems or the By-Name List (BNL).
- Intentionally includes persons with lived experience to provide feedback on the approach and to participate in coordinated outreach.

- **Coordinated Outreach is Housing Focused**

- Street outreach should utilize Housing First approaches.
- The goal is connections to stable housing with tailored services.
- Street outreach does not require people to enter Emergency Shelter (ES) or Transitional Housing (TH) to access housing but offers it as an immediate option.



Why is Coordinating Street Outreach Efforts Important?

- Ensures a first line of defense to keep people experiencing unsheltered homelessness alive, particularly in extremely hot or cold weather.
- A coordinated approach allows outreach teams to expand their reach.
- Reaches vulnerable Veterans who won't seek services on their own.
- Reaches Veterans who can't or won't stay in shelter, including those who may refuse shelter because of past discriminatory experiences due to their race, sexual orientation, disability status etc.
- Reduces confusion and information sharing request to Veterans who may otherwise be engaged multiple times by different outreach teams and asked to complete duplicative assessments.
- Provides a more seamless connection to Coordinated Entry and VA services, including interim and permanent housing.
- Allows for real time engagement at entry for Veterans who may utilize shelters infrequently or only during weather emergencies.

Assessing your Local Community Response



Questions for Consideration

- Does your community coordinate outreach efforts between VA and community programs, and between Veteran specific programs and other community outreach?
- Is the path to connect Veterans to VA services clear for outreach workers who may engage with Veterans? And is this documented in writing?
- Is there same-day access to interim housing if a Veteran is agreeable to enter GPD, HCHV or other shelter programs?
- Does engagement with outreach lead to permanent housing? Specifically, are programs connecting and using BNLs and case conferencing to identify housing plans based on Veterans needs and wants?

Collaborative Strategies



Using a BNL and case conferencing for the purposes of service coordination



Disaggregating data to understand disparities in who is unsheltered (by race, ethnicity, gender, age)



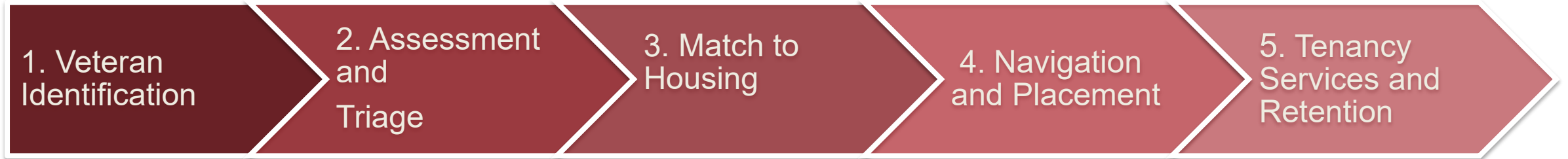
Coordinating outreach logistics



Reaching partners outside the homeless services community

Create One, De-Duplicated By Name List (BNL) of Veterans

- A key strategy to ending homelessness is to know exactly who is experiencing homelessness in your population and track client-level progress to permanent housing.
- Set up the BNL as a tool to move Veterans through the different stages of a housing search.



- Consolidate multiple lists of Veterans in a community into one.
- Leverage Coordinated Entry Specialists to reconcile the list between HOMES and HMIS.
- Review [VA privacy and security policies](#) related to Veteran BNLs; engage VA and partner privacy officers as needed to streamline data sharing activities.

Implement Frequent, Action-Oriented Case Conferencing

- Case conferencing can ensure holistic, coordinated, and integrated assistance across providers for all Veterans, if it is inclusive of all partners.
- Case conferencing should include all participating programs working together to meet Veterans' needs, rather than each program or staff person having to help resolve all the housing barriers a Veteran faces.
- When Veterans who are unsheltered are having contacts with multiple programs, case conferencing can clarify roles and responsibilities and reduce duplication of services.
- Use Case Conferencing to review progress and barriers related to each Veteran's housing goal;
 - To identify and track systemic barriers and strategize solutions across multiple providers;
 - To identify and intervene when a Veteran is at risk of returning to homelessness.

Data Can Help You Understand and Address Disparities

- A great starting point to refine existing processes can be to jointly review system-level data to understand disparities in who is served by your system and what their housing outcomes are.
- Pay attention to whether the demographics of those served match the overall demographics of your community.
- Are there disparities in outcomes (entries into shelter or GPD, exits to PH, returns to homelessness) by race or ethnicity? This can help ensure your collaboration efforts and any process changes are informed by data and driven to emphasize equity across programs, including those targeted to Veterans.
- In addition to data available in HMIS and HOMES, two tools that can help support these efforts are:
 - The HPO Racial Equity Dashboard (based on HOMES data and available to VA employees)
 - The SSVF Equity Report (available to all SSVF grantees)

Potential Coordination Points for Outreach Teams



SCHEDULE



LOCATIONS



DATA
COLLECTION



ENCAMPMENT
PROTOCOLS



EMERGENCY
WEATHER
PROCEDURES

Coordinating Logistics

- Programs serving Veterans should participate in coordinated outreach with other community providers.
- There should be a plan for how to connect Veterans with same-day shelter and permanent housing resources when Veterans are engaged by any community programs. In many communities SSVF providers may fill this immediate role.
- Programs serving Veterans should also active participants of larger outreach planning to resolve encampments or any severe weather protocols.

Coordinated Outreach and Re-Engagement Efforts

- Ensure that outreach efforts are comprehensive—covering a full geographic area and the multiple settings within it—and coordinated across all teams and providers.
- Collaborate with outreach providers beyond the CoC and VA systems to increase the likelihood of finding Veterans who are not regularly engaging with programs or services.
- Sharing information across outreach teams and sites, and in coordination with other systems, including law enforcement, hospitals and emergency departments, prisons and jails, libraries, and job centers.
- Partnering with law enforcement, prisons, jails, and hospitals to conduct both in-reach and outreach to reduce the cycle between homelessness and criminal justice system involvement.

Expanding Partnerships: Connecting With Community Resources

Public systems

- Common public systems- Police and Sheriff's offices, jails, libraries, schools
- Uncommon systems- County road crews, game wardens and conservation agents.

Non-profits

- Common non-profits- Food banks, Community Action Agencies, shelters
- Uncommon- Churches and religious organizations, Veteran Service Organizations (VFW, AM Vets etc.),

Site based outreach

- Common- drop-in centers, day programs, meal locations, shelters
- Uncommon- Truck stops/gas stations, laundromats, liquor stores

Cast a Wide Net With Information

- **Distribute information broadly**
 - Provide flyers, brochures, and contact information to all organizations you work with
 - Place information in shelters, gas stations, laundromats etc. to ensure visibility
- **Make contacting outreach teams easy**
 - Phone numbers, email, social media etc.
 - Schedules of locations and times of outreach
 - Work with partner agencies to ensure that homeless Veterans can use their phone to make the call
- **Be as responsive as possible**
 - Ensure someone has 24/7 phone coverage
 - Go to Veterans if safe and possible
 - Be proactive

Discussion: What is the Current State of Affairs in Your Community

Turn to your neighbor for a brief discussion.

After introductions, share:

- How do these processes square with the efforts in your community?
- What changes could be most impactful to your local efforts?
- Are there any lessons learned or success stories that could benefit other communities?

One Team : Cross Collaboration

Eric Richardson SSVF / VOALA&OC



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One Team : Cross collaboration

Three key examples on the One Team approach in action

- Veteran leadership as part of the Orange County Continuum of Care Board
- Targeted Outreach across Veteran and Non-Veteran providers
- Ask the Questions training



One Team : Cross collaboration

What is a Continuum of Care ? Why are they important to us ?

'Aim to promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improve coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness; improve data collection and performance measurement; and allow each community to tailor its program to the particular strengths and challenges within that community'

- Over 400 CoC's across the USA covering Cities and Counties
- CoC's are the administrative entity channeling state and federal homelessness funding
 - Strategic planning and vision setting for the County
 - Funding and contract management, outreach and housing services
 - Data collation. Veterans Registry, HMIS and CES



One Team : Cross collaboration

Orange County data

- Population: OC - 3.1 million / LA – 9.7 million
- Veterans 2017-2021: OC - 99,720 / LA – 242,368
- Point in Time Count 2022 : 5,718 homeless - 280 Veterans / 145 unsheltered
- Veterans registry presently at 264 Veterans / 164 unsheltered



One Team : Cross collaboration

Orange County Continuum of Care : Veterans planning

- Marching Home strategic County plan for Veterans – 2019
- Veterans representative seat on the Board created 2021
- Veterans CoC Committee created 2022
- Chair voted from CoC Board
- Veterans needs included in the Board direction and strategy



One Team : Cross collaboration

Veterans Committee : Targeted Outreach

A committee that 'makes a difference'

- Meetings bi-monthly with the Veterans Committee Board and public attendance
- Veterans Committee review all the Veterans Registry data in depth
- Agreed a 'targeted' multidisciplinary approach for the following key Veterans groups:

62 years and older (no.45)

Homeless for 10 years or more (no.16)

Families with at least 1 minor (no.16)



One Team : Cross collaboration

Veterans Committee : Targeted Outreach

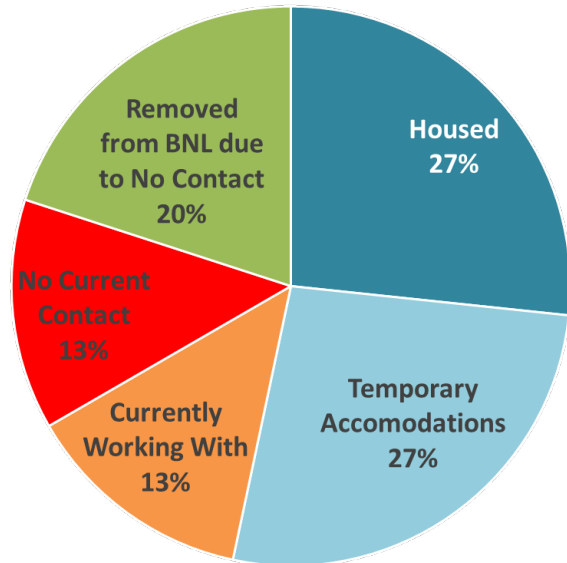
- SSVF and VA lead
- OC community partners – Outreach teams, Care Coordination, Health providers included
- Wider service provision with collaboration
- Joint outreach delivered and ongoing joint support in temporary housing
- Making a difference immediately with Shelter and hotel accommodation available
- Case conferencing across all the specific groups every 2 weeks
- Collaborating housing search and delivery of Housing First



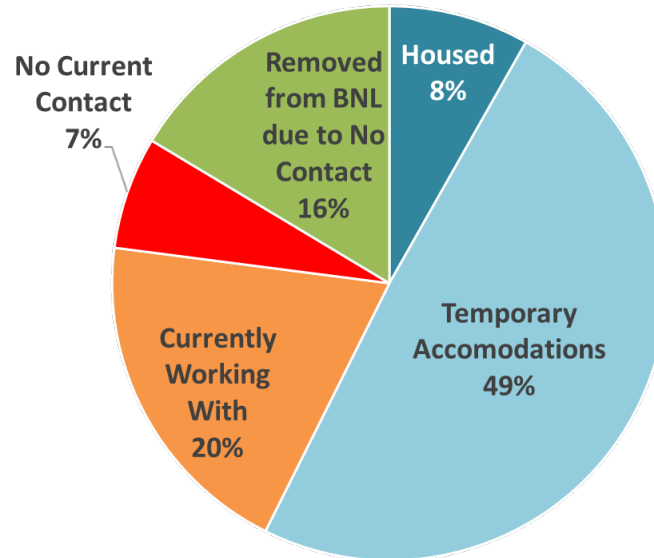
One Team : Cross Collaboration

Veterans Committee : Targeted Outreach

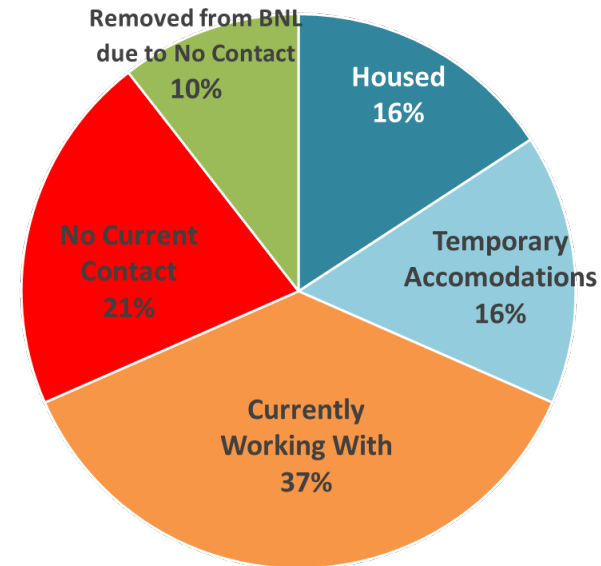
Veterans that have been Homeless 10+ Years
15 Veterans



Veterans 62+
61 Veterans



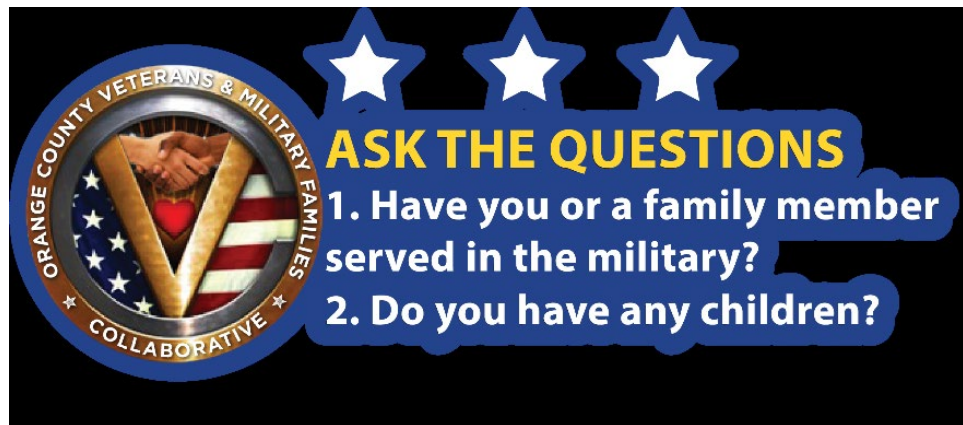
Households with at least One Minor
19 Veterans



One Team : Cross collaboration

Veterans Committee : Ask the Questions

- Joint delivery with 'Orange County Veterans Military Families Collaborative'
- Presentation and training to all non Veteran outreach and housing providers by Committee members
- Consultation and training for the 2024 Point in Time Count.



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One Team : Cross collaboration

Final thoughts:

- Attend your local Continuum of Care Board meeting
- Link with your CoC – ask about a Veterans seat at the board?
- Understand what funding is available through your CoC
- Are Veterans in your CoC's plan or vision?
- Encourage the voice of Veterans with Lived Experience
- Work closely with your non-veteran service providers especially outreach teams – One Goal!
- Are providers asking the right questions?
- Celebrate small wins!

One Team : Cross collaboration

Any questions

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Subregional Approach to Ending Veteran Homelessness in a Large City

Lauren Lapinski, LCSW

Coordinated Entry Specialist

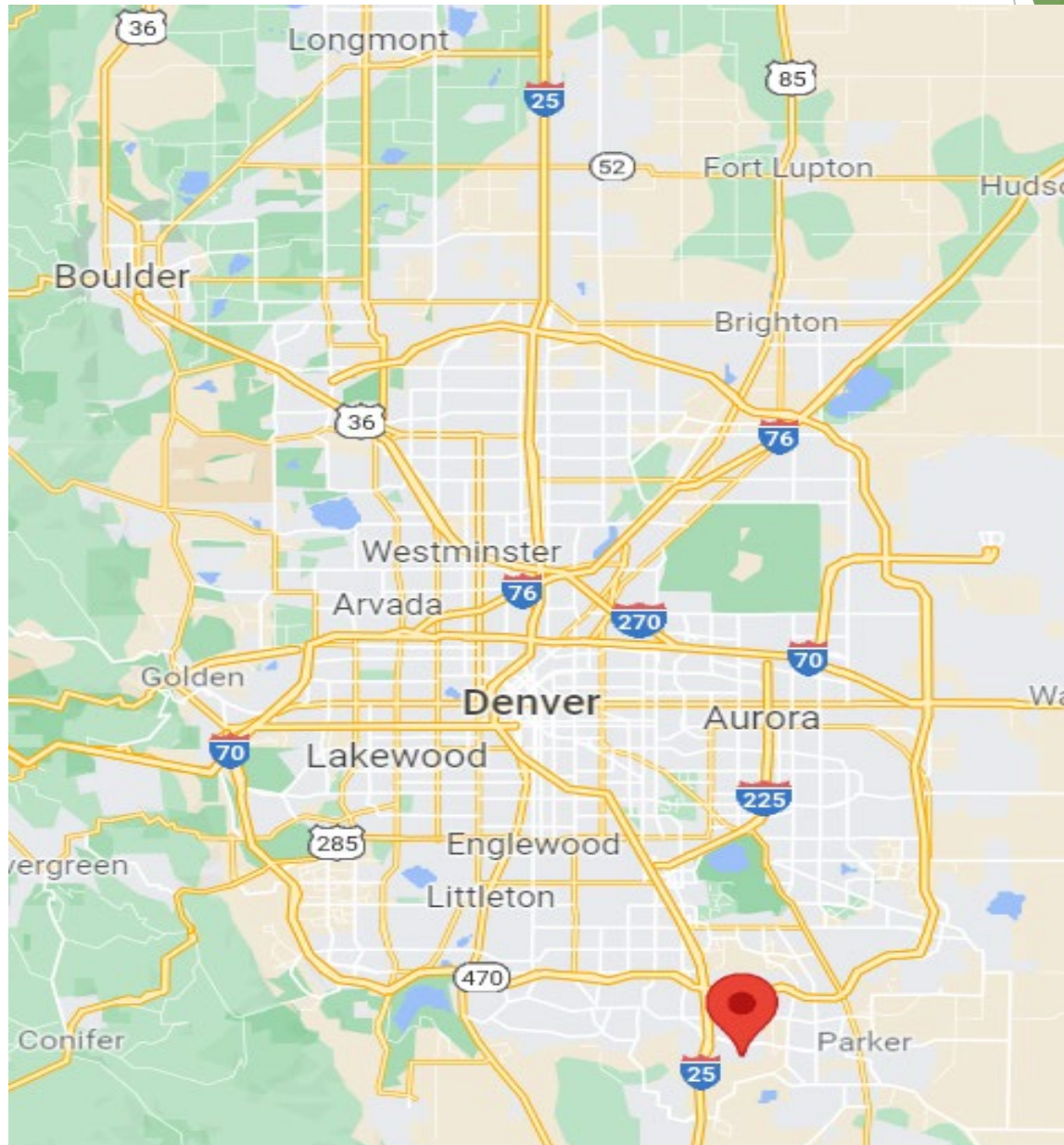
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Denver Metro Area

- 9 Subregions
- 7 Case Conference Meetings
- 380 Veterans on By Name List
- 1 Continuum of Care



Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Reports

- ▶ Weekly HMIS report of new Veterans entering emergency shelter/homeless programs.
- ▶ Coordinated Entry Specialist (CES) combs through list weekly to determine who is already on the BNL and matched to a housing resource.
- ▶ A smaller list is created of Veterans not enrolled on the BNL,
 - ▶ VA eligibility is verified,
 - ▶ Outreach team gets list to engage with Veterans where they are and offer housing resources (VA or community).

Built For Zero (BFZ) Involvement

- ▶ Community Solutions Built for Zero is a movement of more than 90 communities nationwide and internationally, working to measurably and equitably end homelessness – and proving it is possible.
- ▶ Through this initiative, Denver has been working towards achieving Functional Zero, BFZ's metric for ending homelessness among Veterans.

Relationships are Key

- ▶ Building strong relationships with shelter providers, both day shelters and overnight shelters, hospital social workers, SSVF providers, police outreach teams, community outreach workers, non-VA homeless agencies in the local community.
- ▶ Providing ongoing education/training on how to access VA homeless programs and healthcare to our partner agencies are important, especially with high turnover rates that we see within homeless programs in general.
- ▶ Consistently answering client and provider phone calls and the power of showing up.
- ▶ Close partnership with local Continuum of Care coordinated entry staff and HMIS team.
- ▶ Sit in on CES team meetings, collaborate with HMIS team to build out By Name List program and reports.
- ▶ Come to the table with a yes mentality.

Case Conferencing

- ▶ Case conferencing is an **action-oriented** meeting designed to house Veterans as quickly as possible.
- ▶ Help various providers feel part of a community team and empower them with resources.
- ▶ See reduction in overall BNL data and celebrate victories.
- ▶ Resource Sharing.
- ▶ De-duplicate services.
- ▶ Who is in the meeting?
 - ▶ VA staff
 - ▶ Community homeless providers (shelter workers/outreach)
 - ▶ SSVF Providers
 - ▶ Staff from our Continuum of Care

Subregional Case Conferencing

- ▶ Our BNL enrollment allows providers to toggle what subregion a Veteran is currently experiencing homelessness in.
- ▶ Able to run localized BNL report, Boulder BNL, Denver BNL, etc.
- ▶ 7 subregions facilitate their local Case Conference meeting to take accountability for the homeless Veterans in their area.
- ▶ Identify housing paths for Veterans either VA housing resources or local housing resources.
- ▶ Local providers often know where these Veterans frequent and some already have established rapport.
 - ▶ Denver, Jefferson and Aurora Case Conferencing is every week.
 - ▶ Boulder and Adams County Case Conferencing is twice a month.
 - ▶ Douglas and Tri cities Case Conferencing is once a month.

Partnerships Lead to Opportunity for Change

- ▶ As we continue to work closely with our local community partners opportunities for change can arise.
- ▶ Challenging the status quo.
- ▶ Discussing equity and accessibility.
- ▶ Goal oriented meetings to improve the current system.
- ▶ Universal applications (*Current process improvement project*).
- ▶ Bare minimum needed to get a Veteran in the door.
- ▶ Removing barriers leading to increased housing placements.

Where Do We Go From Here?

- ▶ We have not solved Veteran homelessness yet, but we are on a good path.
- ▶ We continue to strengthen our relationships with our community partners and leaders in hopes of making our homeless response system more equitable and accessible to all.
- ▶ Once our community has reached functional zero for Veteran homelessness, we hope to replicate that for, all singles, families, and youth in the Metro Denver area.

Further Questions, Please Reach Out To;

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THANK YOU

Report Out and Wrap-Up