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Secretaries of VA, HUD joint statement on ending Veteran homelessness

From VA Secretary Denis McDonough and HUD Secretary Marcia L. Fudge

WASHINGTON — The [Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report \(AHAR\) to Congress](#) found that on a single night in January 2020, there were 37,252 Veterans experiencing homelessness in America, an increase of 0.4% over 2019.

This number does not account for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has added to the nation's housing challenges, including among Veterans.

AHAR showed investments from Congress along with strong collaboration between the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) brought about a 47% reduction in Veteran homelessness between 2010 and 2016. However, a [GAO report](#) found that, since 2016, progress towards ending Veteran homelessness has stalled. We find this pattern deeply concerning. No Veteran who has served this country — let alone more than 37,000 on a given night — should experience homelessness.

We, the secretaries of VA and HUD, are aligning efforts and joining forces to work towards ending Veteran homelessness. We are mobilizing the strength of our two departments to do everything in our power to ensure every Veteran has access to safe and stable housing.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to tackle this crisis. The [American Rescue Plan](#) included more than \$10 billion in funding for individuals who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. The [American Jobs Plan](#) would invest \$213 billion to produce, preserve, and retrofit more than two million affordable homes.

Our collaboration is the first step of a multi-phased whole-of-government effort that will ultimately help us end Veteran homelessness. We will evaluate existing strategies, implement new approaches when necessary, and execute a plan to ensure we achieve tangible results that incorporate best practices, feedback, and lessons learned from Veterans, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders.

To fulfill this mission, we will:

- **Make ending Veteran homelessness a top priority** – VA and HUD will prioritize this effort at the highest levels. Staff in both agencies will collaboratively develop a strategy to significantly reduce the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness, as well as a strategy to ensure that no Veteran experiences homelessness in the future. The secretaries will participate in listening sessions with stakeholder groups, including Veterans with lived expertise. Information and materials gathered will be analyzed for use during quarterly meetings with homeless program staff from both departments to inform decisions about changes to policies and programs. We will develop targets, assess progress, and hold our agencies accountable.
- **Lead with an evidence-based Housing First approach** – Evidence and past progress on reducing Veteran homelessness demonstrate a Housing First approach works. Together, our agencies will ensure targeted interventions (such as [HUD-VA Supportive Housing](#), [Supportive Services for Veteran Families](#), and [Grant and Per Diem](#)) help Veterans obtain stable housing as quickly as possible without barriers or preconditions.
- **Reach underserved Veterans** – Reducing Veteran homelessness will require new approaches to serving Veterans for whom prior efforts may have fallen short. These include Veterans with less than honorable discharge status, as well as Veterans who are women, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, transgender and gender non-conforming, aging, and/or living in rural areas. We will ensure our interagency effort identifies and removes barriers to VA care and services, so benefits are equitably available among underserved Veteran communities.
- **Ensure the delivery of quality supportive services** – Supportive services are critical to helping Veterans find and retain housing, and to use it as a platform for achieving health, recovery, and economic success. Working diligently with federal and community stakeholders, we commit to identifying ways to ensure Veterans have access to quality supportive health, mental health, and [medical legal services](#) alongside [employment](#) and housing assistance, whether provided by VA or community partners.
- **Increase the supply of and access to affordable housing** – A significant obstacle to ending Veteran homelessness is the lack of affordable housing, especially in many urban centers. We will work jointly, including examining opportunities through the American Rescue Plan and the American Jobs Plan, to increase the supply of affordable housing and ensure Veterans have access. Our agencies will do this by engaging landlords, and affordable housing developers, supporting the use of federal programs to create and subsidize affordable housing, identifying ways to improve Veteran access to these housing units, and supporting state and local collaboration to

finance and create affordable housing.

Working to end Veteran homelessness requires a multi-agency effort, coordinated through the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. Together, we can enhance how we deliver services and provide opportunities to Veterans to ensure we bring the full force of the federal government to end Veteran homelessness.

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