



September 8, 2016

CoC Competition Focus: Ending Veteran Homelessness

Since 2010, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness has been cut nearly in half to just under 40,000 veterans, with 13,000 living in unsheltered locations. To date, [2 states and 29 communities](#) have effectively ended homelessness amongst veterans.

This *Competition Focus* message provides information and resources to help Continuums of Care (CoCs) and stakeholders understand the FY 2016 policy priority *ending veteran homelessness*.

Continue Work Towards Meeting and Sustaining the Goal

Ending veteran homelessness continues to be a [high policy priority of this Administration](#). While the timeframe established in *Opening Doors* to end veteran homelessness was December 2015, there is still a lot of work to do to meet this goal nationally. Therefore, we encourage communities to continue efforts to meeting this ambitious goal, ensuring that homelessness amongst veterans is rare, brief, and non-recurring. And for those communities that have already met the goal, celebrate the great accomplishment but know that sustaining it is just as important as getting there.

Keep measuring your progress towards reaching the goal by using the [criteria and benchmarks](#) established by HUD, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to assess the performance of your homeless assistance system in meeting the needs of homeless veterans. Use the [tools and resources](#) that go along with the criteria and benchmarks to help you do this.

Evaluate Your System and Submit a Strong Community Claim

Communities who have submitted strong claims through the [Federal interagency review process](#) have demonstrated the following:

- **Ability to identify all veterans experiencing homelessness.** The community demonstrates a comprehensive outreach strategy covering a full geographic area and the multiple settings within it and which is coordinated across all teams and providers. Additionally, the community uses an active list (commonly referred to as a by-name-list) that is regularly updated with data from all community partners including the VA, allowing the community to track progress from the point of initial engagement to housing placement in real time.
- **Resources, plans, and system capacity in place should any veteran become homeless or be at risk of homelessness in the future.** The community demonstrates that resources are available to prevent homelessness for veterans at risk of homelessness and to promote long-term housing stability of formerly homeless veterans that have entered permanent housing (e.g., on-going case management, connections to employment, peer support programs). Additionally, the community has demonstrated a strong coordinated entry process to identify veterans who might become homeless or return to homelessness in the future.
- **Capacity to assist veterans move quickly into permanent housing.** The community has demonstrated that a system-wide [Housing First orientation](#) is in place allowing veterans to access housing quickly with few barriers to entry. The community also has robust permanent housing options (e.g., HUD-VASH, SSVF,



Housing Choice Vouchers) that allow for veteran choice.

- **Service-intensive transitional housing is provided in limited circumstances only.** The community has demonstrated that when service-intensive transitional housing is provided that it has been chosen by the veteran, who was also offered a choice of permanent housing, and that the transitional housing has a purposeful focus on minimizing lengths of stay and a strong emphasis on Housing First principles and practices.
- **Ability to shelter immediately any veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness.** The shelter made available by these communities is low-barrier and when a shelter bed is not available the community has a pre-existing plan in place to shelter unsheltered veterans.
- **Deploy all resources effectively.** The community efficiently deploys and fully utilizes all available resources to meet the needs of veterans experiencing homelessness. While the VA has a vast array of resources available to house veterans experiencing homelessness such as HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), not all veterans experiencing homelessness will be eligible to receive assistance through the VA. In those cases, CoC and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program resources should be used.
- **Actively recruit landlords.** The community has created partnerships with private market landlords, ensuring that units are available for veterans experiencing homelessness to choose from when looking for permanent housing. One popular incentive to engage landlords in a tight housing market is the use of [Landlord Risk Mitigation Funds](#).

These strategies have been highlighted in technical assistance materials developed by HUD and our partners, including USICH and the VA. We encourage you to read and use these resources, some of which can be found at the end of this message, to help you end veteran homelessness in your community. As always, CoCs who need help using any of the above strategies are encouraged to contact their technical assistance providers and request additional TA. The list of communities that have ended veteran homelessness continues to grow and we are proud to see that ending veteran homelessness is within reach of so many. As always, thank you for your tremendous work.

Norm Suchar and Linda Charest
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Additional Resources

- [When Homelessness Becomes Rare, Brief, & Non-Recurring: Clarifying the Federal Criteria & Benchmarks](#)
- [Initiatives and Programs for Homeless Veteran Service Providers](#): A variety of toolkits, including a collection of Vets@Home toolkits, to help communities identify and engage veterans experiencing homelessness, develop an effective homeless resource system, connect veterans to permanent housing, and maintain stability in that housing
- [10 Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness](#)
- SNAPS In Focus Messages:



- [Strategies for Ending Veteran Homelessness in 2015](#)
- [Collaborating to Combat Homelessness Among Veterans](#)
- [What it Means to End Veteran Homelessness](#)
- [Increasing Housing Placements of Homeless Veterans](#)
- [Resources for engaging landlords](#)
- The HUD Exchange's [Resources for Homeless Veterans page](#)
- The VA's [Ending Veterans Homeless page](#)
- [VA Guidance on HMIS Access](#)
- USICH's [Goals for Veterans](#) page