



October 2, 2015

SNAPS In Focus: What it Means to End Veteran Homelessness

Just over five years ago, this Administration set out to not just address homelessness, but to end it. Since the launch of *Opening Doors*, HUD, our federal partners, and communities across the country have been changing the way this work is done, turning status quo on its head. We have broken down silos and fostered partnerships that were once considered impossible. We have taken risks, tested strategies, and changed course when something was not having the impact expected. And as a result, we are seeing tremendous progress. As we get closer to December 31, 2015 — the target date established in *Opening Doors* for when we as a nation would end veteran homelessness — many communities are wondering: How are we doing?

For years we have measured progress based on the results of the point-in-time (PIT) count. But ending veteran homelessness locally is not just about reducing the number of veterans identified at a point in time. It is also about having a system in place that is able to prevent veterans from experiencing homelessness to the maximum extent possible while connecting veterans that do experience homelessness to permanent housing as quickly as possible, making sure that it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Earlier this year, HUD, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released a set of criteria to help communities assess their progress based on our knowledge at the time. Although there was a great deal of thought and consideration that went into those criteria, we realized over time that we needed to be clearer about our expectations and that communities needed criteria and benchmarks that could be measured. Earlier this week, [we released an updated set of criteria](#) accompanied by benchmarks that communities can refer to in order to determine if the criteria have been met. The purpose of the benchmarks is to help communities make real and lasting changes that are needed to truly end homelessness among veterans. However, we recognize that communities face unique circumstances and challenges that require consideration.

Communities that believe they have met these updated criteria can submit a request to HUD and its federal partners to validate this accomplishment. We will be releasing a set of specifications shortly to help communities gauge whether or not they have met the criteria and benchmarks. To begin the confirmation process, a community can take the following steps:

- Download the criteria and benchmarks, from <http://usich.gov/action/what-it-means-to-end-homelessness/criteria-for-achieving-the-goal-of-ending-veteran-homelessness>.
- Contact any one of the following federal representatives — the HUD Field Office, HUD Regional Administrator, Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) Homeless Coordinator, VA Medical Center representative, or [USICH Regional Coordinator](#) — to let them know you are planning to submit and request the template to complete for confirmation.
- Gather the requested data and complete the template.
- Submit the confirmation request to your primary federal representative.



An Interagency Review Team, made up of representatives from USICH, HUD, and the VA, will review your request, ask any clarifying questions we may have, and let you know the outcome of our review.

Finally, there are a few additional points that you should consider:

- If your community is one of the 75 communities participating in the Zero: 2016 initiative then you may be aware that the criteria for measuring an end to veteran homelessness are different in that initiative. The communities in Zero: 2016 are leading the way in ending veteran homelessness, and those communities are receiving significant investments of federally-funded technical assistance in order to be able to do so. A community may be able to demonstrate that it has met the federal criteria but still have additional work to do in order to meet the Zero: 2016 accomplishment and we will continue to provide support to those communities in order to get there.
- We have never ended veteran homelessness before so we are learning as we go! As we continue to learn from communities, we will refine and adapt the criteria and benchmarks. We also recognize that community context matters. For this reason, the benchmarks are not intended to be pass/fail and community context will be taken into account when considering community claims.

Thank you for all that you do in the efforts to end homelessness in your community!

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