

Ventura County Uses HPRP and HUD-VASH to Assist Homeless Veterans

Positive Stories / Lessons Learned from HPRP: *Community Success Story*

HPRP Grantee:	Ventura County, CA
CoC Name and Number:	CA-605 – San Buenaventura/Ventura County CoC

Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	286	Total persons in TH:	247
Total persons in Safe Haven:	10	Total unsheltered persons:	861
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	1,404		

On the streets and in the hills of Ventura County, homeless veterans make up over 10 percent of the unsheltered population. Even with the nearby military base and VA outpatient medical clinic, some veterans are not accessing the services they need. The County's Human Services Agency (HSA) social workers have been increasingly concerned about the presence of veterans on the streets. With the arrival of HPRP funds, a new solution to their concerns could be pursued.

The County's HPRP grantee saw an opportunity for collaboration when the L.A. and Ventura County public housing authorities (PHAs) received HUD-VASH vouchers. The grantee reached out to the Los Angeles Veterans Administration to find out how to use HPRP and HUD-VASH together. HPRP staff invited the L.A. VASH team to visit Ventura County, two hours south. The Ventura staff oriented the VASH team to the County's mix of urban and rural areas, its local methods of veteran outreach, and its PHAs.

The County put forth great effort to build a relationship with the VASH team, which resulted in expanded services and support for the area's homeless veterans. Karol Schulkin, Homeless Services Coordinator, explained, "we worked for a level of comfort that allowed the VASH team to really co-partner with us in case management. Because we're right here, on the doorsteps of the people they're giving vouchers to, we're able to provide a lot of the support that would be harder for VASH to provide from a distance."

HPRP offers housing search assistance, housing inspections, and transportation assistance for travel to the VASH offices in Los Angeles. VASH social workers learn of veterans' concerns during home visits, and then communicate them to HPRP staff for follow-up. The County HSA workers, with their intimate knowledge of local agencies, then refer the veterans to the appropriate services.

Due to County-led cooperation among PHAs, landlords, and community organizations, veterans are typically housed within three weeks of intake. Without HPRP, this would be impossible, as a veteran's greatest housing barrier—once receiving the VASH subsidy—is pulling together enough money for a rental deposit. HSA social workers also know the housing market, the neighborhoods, and where to find the accessible buildings. Schulkin recalled that they "didn't have to start from scratch." Nor do the veterans, who find furniture, food, and household goods waiting for them on move-in day, coordinated by HPRP.

HPRP has served about 75 percent of Ventura County's current HUD-VASH clients, in addition to 1,800 non-veterans. The re-housing program will continue for two years beyond HPRP with a \$750,000 influx from the Ventura County Board of Supervisors. HPRP gave Ventura County an immediate, concrete way to help its homeless veterans get housed. Schulkin describes the difference: "PHAs have a waiting list of four to five years. Tell that to a wounded, disenchanted, disappointed Veteran, and you might as well tell them to wait ten years. But now we have resources to work with them, to tell them we can help them get a place indoors. It makes housing possible. It stirs up their hope. And by supplementing HUD-VASH with HPRP, we can quickly put our veterans into the safe and quiet homes they need."

For more information, contact Karol Schulkin, County of Ventura Human Services Agency at 805-385-1888 or karol.schulkin@ventura.org.