

Government Officials Action Guide

Overview

Since 2010, VA has helped more than 600,000 Veterans and their families find stable, secure housing. VA did not accomplish this alone. Partnerships with a multitude of local and state governments and community organizations ensure homeless Veterans receive the resources and wraparound services, like healthcare, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, job training, and community reintegration support, they need to secure stable permanent housing; find employment; and become valued community members. While there have been major accomplishments, more work is needed. Government officials can make a big difference.

This guide provides information that state and local government officials can use to get involved and encourage their constituents to help prevent and end Veteran homelessness in their community. This guide can also be found online at www.va.gov/homeless.

Challenges to Ending Veteran Homelessness

- A lack of affordable housing.
- An unwillingness of some landlords to accept Veterans with HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers that subsidize the cost of rent for low-income Veterans.
- Concerns among potential employers about formerly homeless Veterans' job-readiness.

What You Can Do

Increase Inventory of Affordable Housing: Support policies and laws that forbid discrimination based on payment source and encourage landlords to accept HUD-VASH vouchers by emphasizing the safety net of services provided to homeless Veterans under the HUD-VASH program.

Share Information: Distribute information about VA's Veteran homelessness programs to your constituents, including community and neighborhood organizations, schools, faith-based organizations, and others.

Participate in Local Homelessness Events: Support Stand Downs, Operation Reveille events, or other local activities that provide homeless Veterans with services, such as food, transitional or permanent housing, clothing, health screenings, and benefits counseling.

Collaborate with Employers: Organize community job fairs where prospective employers can meet job-ready Veterans who are exiting homelessness and learn about their work histories, skills, abilities, and professional interests. Refer prospective employers to VA's Community Employment Coordinators (CECs) who can help identify job-ready formerly homeless Veterans for vacancies within their organization. A list of CECs is located at www.va.gov/homeless/cec-contacts.asp.

Create Local Mitigation Fund: Support the creation of a mitigation fund that can serve as an incentive for property owners to rent to formerly homeless Veterans and others with challenging rental histories. Fund may be used for the repair of property damage, unpaid rent, legal fees, and other damages.

Use VA's Available Resources: Visit VA's [website](http://www.va.gov/homeless) to find information and resources that are helping many communities make significant progress in ending Veteran homelessness. Refer Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless to their local [VA medical center](#), where VA staff are ready to assist, or urge them to call 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838).

What VA Is Doing

- Leasing its underutilized buildings and vacant land to private sector partners to develop supportive housing for eligible Veterans.
- Adopting effective strategies used in communities across the country, including the Housing First model, to help Veterans exit homelessness and remain stably housed. Housing First is an evidence-based and cost-effective approach that prioritizes rapid housing, without preconditions, and then assists homeless Veterans with access to wraparound services, such as healthcare, employment assistance, education, expedited benefits claims processing, and other supportive services.
- Permanently housing, rapidly rehousing, or preventing Veterans and their family members from falling into homelessness through HUD's targeted housing vouchers and VA's homelessness programs.

What Reducing and Ending Veteran Homelessness May Look Like in Your Community

- Identification of all homeless Veterans by name and placement of each on the pathway to permanent housing.
- Implementation of a coordinated local network of programs that can quickly help homeless and at-risk Veterans become and remain stably housed.
- Use of your state's income tax credits to offset the cost of building affordable housing for homeless Veterans. This and other incentives can increase the inventory of affordable housing available for homeless Veterans and other vulnerable populations.
- Increased inventory of affordable housing units through incentives tailored to the needs of your community, homeless Veterans, and other vulnerable populations. Incentives proven successful may include permits to build increased density, parking or design waivers, zoning variances, tax abatements, fee waivers, and expedited permitting.
- Percentage of affordable units allocated for developments receiving city or pass-through dollars.

What VA Will Do to Support You

- Share best practices that streamline solutions to the complex issue of homelessness in your community. To learn more about the programs and practices that have helped many communities successfully house and find employment for homeless and at-risk Veterans, download *VA's Guide to Promising Practices for Preventing and Ending Veteran Homelessness Community by Community*.
- Provide grants to qualified organizations through a competitive award process to fill critical gaps in transitional housing, case management support, and other services that help put homeless Veterans on the pathway to becoming and remaining stably housed.

Progress Reducing Veteran Homelessness Nationwide

- 46 percent reduction in Veteran homelessness since 2010, when the initiative began.
- As of February 2018, 60 communities and three states—Connecticut, Delaware and Virginia—effectively ended Veteran homelessness. More communities are poised to achieve this goal in 2018.
- HUD's 2017 Point-in-Time Count estimated the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness on a single night was just over 40,000, a 1.5 percent increase between 2016 and 2017.

A phone call away.

If a Veteran you know is homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless, refer him or her to their local VA medical center where staff is ready to assist, or urge them to call **1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838)**. Trained, supportive professionals are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to connect Veterans with the care they need to get back on their feet.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Help for Homeless Veterans
877-4AID-VET
va.gov/homeless | (877) 424-3838