



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Veterans Health Administration Homeless Programs Office



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As Executive Director of the Homeless Programs Office (HPO), I am proud to present the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Homeless Programs Office Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Annual Report.

The 52% decline in Veteran homelessness over the past 13 years points to HPO's ability to effectively implement the Housing First approach, innovate service delivery, and collaborate with cross-agency, interagency, and community partners.

Additionally, as part of [VA's Calendar Year \(CY\) 2023 Homelessness Goals](#), we adopted a One Team Approach to enhance how housing and supportive services are delivered to homeless and at-risk Veterans.

Our One Team Approach draws upon many different concepts to ensure that every homeless Veteran has a coordinated, holistic, and tailored housing and service solution centered on their choice. It also ensures that this solution effectively integrates all the different resources available in their community.

Our major accomplishments this year include:

- **Accelerating permanent housing placements.** Nearly 35,150 Veterans were housed as part of VA's CY 2023 Homelessness Goals as of September 30, 2023. Overall, more than 74,878 Veterans and their families were housed or prevented from becoming homeless.
- **Preventing Veterans from returning to homelessness and re-engaging with those who have.** Nearly 97% of the Veterans who were housed in CY 2023 remained in housing as of September 30, 2023. Of the 1,199 Veterans who returned to homelessness, 95% were rehoused or placed back on a path to rehousing.
- **Proving that ending Veteran homelessness is possible.** Since 2015, **83 communities and three states have effectively ended Veteran homelessness.** This proves that with a commitment from leadership, dedication of resources, and active coordination of VA and community services, it is possible to end Veteran homelessness.
- **Maximizing voucher utilization.** At the end of the fiscal year, over 82,500 formerly homeless Veteran families were under lease with a Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) voucher — more than ever before.
- **Increasing VA's outreach capacity.** Through Health Care for Homeless Veterans, we added 160 new staff to enhance street and community outreach to unsheltered homeless Veterans or lead VA's local efforts to integrate into communities' coordinated entry systems. More than 31,400 unsheltered Veterans were engaged as of September 30, 2023.
- **Striving toward high reliability.** VA's Grant and Per Diem Program Office was the CY 2023 Quarter 1 HeRO Award winner for their work in housing 10,426 Veterans as part of **VA's 38,000 Permanent Housing Placement Challenge in 2022** — an unprecedented increase of 1,000 placements from 2021. The National HeRO Award is the highest level of High-Reliability Organization recognition available within VHA and is awarded quarterly to honor employees who advance VHA's Journey to High Reliability through demonstrations of VHA's HRO Principles in action.
- **Preventing homelessness during the transition to civilian life.** The National Center on Homelessness among Veterans (NCHAV) launched the Help with Employment, Agency, Risk, Transitions and Housing (HEARTH) Project, whose aim is to prevent Veteran homelessness during their military to civilian transition. The project aims to use predictive analytics to proactively engage high-risk Army Veterans and facilitate their access to VA and non-VA services.
- **Enhancing the scientific understanding of homelessness among Veterans.** NCHAV generated over 40 peer-reviewed research publications on homelessness among Veterans and five research briefs that enhance evidence-based knowledge of effective programs and services to address Veteran homelessness.

- **Filling critical gaps in Veteran care.** From May 2021 through the end of the Public Health Emergency (PHE) on May 11, 2023, nearly \$13.1 million in funding was spent on over 69,300 Veterans through the expanded flexibilities authorized by the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, MD Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act. VA purchased groceries, meals, apartment start-up kits, furniture, Goodwill merchandise vouchers, and laundry vouchers for Veterans experiencing homelessness.
- **Expanding criminal justice partnerships.** Our Veterans Justice Programs implemented the first-ever Legal Services for Veterans Grant program, awarding over \$11.5 million in funding to 79 grantees. These grantees will provide a wide range of legal services to Veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness in 38 states and the District of Columbia. Additionally, VA began rolling out a national Veteran-Focused Law Enforcement Deflection and Community Partnership Training Series over the summer and has conducted training with about half of our medical centers. The training is designed to foster deflection partnerships — innovative community police interventions that deflect Veterans away from contact with the criminal justice system and toward needed services.
- **Addressing barriers to transportation.** By the end of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, we provided nearly 494,000 rides to over 44,000 Veterans through VA's National Rideshare Program at a value of over \$16 million.
- **Bringing primary care services directly to homeless Veterans.** VA deployed 11 of 25 mobile medical units (MMUs) to Homeless Patient Aligned Care Teams (HPACTs). These units provide health care and supportive services to Veterans experiencing homelessness in their communities.

This annual report highlights each program's accomplishments in providing case management and other services — housing, financial, physical and mental health, legal and employment — so that no Veteran experiences the tragedy and indignity of homelessness and each one of them has a safe, stable, accessible, and affordable home.

Monica Diaz

Executive Director, Homeless Programs Office
Veterans Health Administration | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



REPORT OVERVIEW

The breadth and impact of HPO's programs and services are illustrated in the following sections of this report:

- Housing Programs
- Employment Services
- Health Care Services
- Veterans Justice Programs
- Community Programs
- Interagency Programs and Services
- Research

Each section provides a brief description of specific programs and services along with data that shows the impact on and value to Veterans.



HOUSING PROGRAMS

VA's housing programs are guided by the Housing First approach, based on the premise that when Veterans have a place to call home, they are better able to benefit from supportive services. The key principles of Housing First as they are applied under VA's housing programs are respect, warmth, and compassion for all Veterans; Veteran choice and self-determination; recovery orientation focused on individual well-being; and use of harm reduction strategies. Housing First features rapid, streamlined entry into a housing program with no preconditions such as sobriety or completion of alcohol or drug treatment for obtaining tenancy. As Veterans achieve their goals, establish recovery, and gain independence, the services they receive are continually adjusted to meet their needs.

Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program

HUD-VASH is a collaborative program between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and VA that combines HUD housing choice rental vouchers with VA case management services. Congress has appropriated funds for more than 111,000 housing choice vouchers for HUD-VASH. The program has housed over 180,000 Veterans and their families since FY 2012.

HUD-VASH is targeted at Veterans experiencing homelessness who have the greatest need for case management and supportive services to maintain permanent housing. This includes Veterans with serious mental illness, physical health diagnoses, and substance use disorders. These services, delivered by VA, may include mental health and substance use disorder treatment, primary health care, support for integration into the community, and employment assistance.

HUD allows **Public Housing Agencies** (PHAs) administering a HUD-VASH program, in partnership with local VA facilities, to use their tenant-based HUD-VASH voucher funding to allocate project-based units. Project-based HUD-VASH vouchers provide PHAs the opportunity to secure affordable housing for Veterans in the community, and offer Veterans expanded options on where they live. The HUD-VASH program has partnered with local governments and property developers in 43 states to set aside 10,994 Veteran housing choice vouchers at 490 housing projects throughout the country. By the end of FY 2023, 8,052 of those units were available for Veterans with another 2,942 in development.

Eligibility for HUD-VASH was expanded by Section 9103 of the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2021 (P.L. 116-283), which became law on January 1, 2021. P.L. 116-283 extended eligibility for HUD-VASH vouchers and VA case management services to any individual meeting the definition of “Veteran” defined as “a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, regardless of length of service, and who was discharged or released therefrom,” excluding anyone who received a dishonorable discharge from the Armed Forces or was discharged or dismissed from the Armed Forces by reason of the sentence of a general court-martial. 38 U.S.C. § 2002(b). By the end of FY 2023, HUD-VASH had served over 7,500 Veterans who qualified under this new authority.

This year, HUD-VASH focused on building new partnerships and strengthening existing ones. The majority of Veterans enrolled in HUD-VASH are aged 60 years and older, and many have more intensive service needs. To better serve these Veterans and to help them stay housed independently and age in place, HUD-VASH has funded 13 Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Geriatrics Specialists to coordinate these services, and 49 (for a total of 91) clinicians to provide enhanced services to aging Veterans in project-based settings.

HUD-VASH also collaborated with HUD to host two regional process improvement workshops in FY 2023, with another eight scheduled for the first quarter of FY 2024.

These “HUD-VASH Boot Camps” are an opportunity for VA and PHA staff to come together to hear presentations from national experts, learn about emerging flexibilities and best practices, and perform joint process mapping and analysis designed to improve HUD-VASH program operations.

For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp.

HUD-VASH Success Story

VA homeless programs there for Army Veteran

A VA social worker helped homeless Army Veteran Teresa White find a home.

“White joined the Army right out of high school and served as a driver for several years. However, after an air suppressor exploded in the vehicle she was driving, she decided against reenlisting and began transitioning to civilian life. White stayed with family members while working part-time jobs but began to feel like a burden and started living in her car.

Like many Veterans, White was hesitant to ask for help. Veterans she met encouraged her to visit VA and ask what services she qualified for, but she was unsure.

“I was really embarrassed. I was scared,” she said, believing that VA programs were intended for older Veterans. “I’m too young to be asking for help. I had to just put myself out there and be okay to ask questions and reach out.”

White first visited the Kankakee Veterans Assistance Commission to receive household supplies. A representative at the front desk said, “I know somebody who can help. Her name is Gabby.”

To read the full story, visit:

news.va.gov/118984/va-helps-homeless-army-veteran-find-a-home/



17,827 Veterans moved into HUD-VASH housing in FY 2023.



82,522 Veterans who had experienced homelessness remained in stable housing through HUD-VASH at the end of the fiscal year.

Tribal HUD-VASH

According to the 2010 Census, more than 150,000 Veterans identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN). Because most tribal lands do not have homeless shelters, safe havens, or other homeless resources, tribal members (who often describe themselves as “houseless” rather than “homeless”) frequently shelter in the often overcrowded homes of family or friends. Tribal HUD-VASH seeks to house AI/AN Veterans who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness on or near their home reservations, supporting their choice to live near natural support with access to culturally and spiritually meaningful practices and traditional healing. In Tribal HUD-VASH, rental assistance is provided through a hybrid Indian Housing Block Grant awarded by HUD rather than a standard HUD-VASH voucher. AI/AN Veterans enrolled

in the program receive tailored VA case management and clinical services designed to help them exit homelessness and sustain permanent housing.

Tribal HUD-VASH was established in 2015 and expanded in 2021. A second expansion in August 2022 increased the estimated capacity of Tribal HUD-VASH to 620 Veteran households.

Watch our video: [From Homeless to Housed: Stories From Native American Veterans Assisted Through VA.](#)

For more information, visit:

[hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih/tribalhudvash.](https://hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih/tribalhudvash)



118 Veterans moved into housing with a Tribal HUD-VASH rental subsidy in FY 2023.



454 Veterans were housed with a Tribal HUD-VASH rental subsidy by the end of FY 2023.

HUD-VASH's Homeless Aging and Disabled Veteran Initiative

The Homeless Aging and Disabled Veteran Initiative was developed in response to the growing number of Veterans entering the homeless system of care with complex needs that often exceeded the capacity of the existing homeless response system.

In 2015, the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans convened a panel to discuss the growth rates and special needs of the older homeless Veteran population. The panel anticipated an upward trend in the number of older Veterans (60+ years of age) who are homeless, from 17,000 to 22,000 by 2025. As of FY 2022, the panel identified that approximately 60% of Veterans served by the Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program are over 60, and it was anticipated that these Veterans would continue to require intensive permanent housing supportive services to delay institutionalization. This population typically has considerable geriatric physical health conditions, mental health conditions, and substance use disorders. To help meet the needs of the aging homeless Veteran population, the panel recommended that VA better integrate with community health care, social services, and housing programs to enable Veterans to age in place for as long as possible and avoid long term nursing home care.

Utilizing whole health principles in partnership with Geriatrics and Extended Care (GEC) and the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP), the HUD-VASH program provides high-quality care to Veterans who are aging and/or living with complex medical needs to help them live as independently as possible with necessary supports. The program continues to provide innovative ways to utilize existing resources as well as enhance collaboration with local community partners. The primary focus is to provide safe and stable housing and ensure access to necessary supportive services.

The HUD-VASH initiative approach comprises four key strategies:

1. Increase access to Geriatric and Extended Care (GEC) services for Veterans experiencing homelessness.
2. Develop housing options to assist with using HUD-VASH vouchers in specialized programs utilizing HUD Special Housing Types.
3. Expand the use of HUD-VASH project-based vouchers with intensive services that could be provided on-site.
4. Proactively develop partnerships with community agencies.

Listen to the Ending Veteran Homelessness podcast episode titled, "[Growing Older Together: How VA is Evolving to Support Aging Veterans.](#)"

Aging and Disabled Veterans Initiative Success Story

VA Homeless programs a "good win" for Navy Veteran

A native of Clearwater, Florida, William Peterson was accustomed to spending his time around the sea when he enlisted in the Navy. As a radioman on the USS Arlington and USS Constellation, he loved learning Morse code and named his time stationed in Guam as the highlight of his career.

Peterson recalls hearing about VA programs designed to help Veterans while he was on active duty. He never anticipated that one day he would share his story with Veterans across the country to encourage them to use these programs.

Peterson was one of the first Veterans Lisa Goodwin met when she began working at the Lake Baldwin VA Clinic nearly a decade ago. She recalls Peterson as one of the "lowest maintenance" Veterans on her caseload who did not demand a great deal of her attention.

He had come to VA seeking housing support through HUD-VASH, a collaborative program that pairs HUD's Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance with VA case management and supportive services for Veterans experiencing homelessness.

To read the full story, visit:

news.va.gov/115543/va-homeless-programs-win-navy-veteran/



602 Veterans received care in medical foster homes, community residential care, or assisted living facilities.



2,347 aging and disabled Veterans were served at standard project-based voucher (PBV) sites.



477 aging and disabled Veterans were served with enhanced care in PBV.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program

SSVF is designed to rapidly rehouse and provide guidance and case management services to Veteran families who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. (Veteran families are defined as a single Veteran or a family in which the head of household or the spouse of the head of household is a Veteran.) VA grants funds to private nonprofit organizations and consumer cooperatives to help Veteran families access a full range of community benefits designed to prevent homelessness. Through SSVF, Veterans can obtain VA and other benefits that may include health care, daily living services, financial planning services, transportation, legal services, childcare, and housing counseling. Time-limited payments to landlords, utility companies, moving companies, and licensed childcare providers may also be provided to help Veterans stay in or acquire permanent housing.

For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp.

- **115,834** Veterans and family members served.
- **11,578** women Veterans were served, accounting for 15% of the total 78,116 Veterans served. This service rate exceeds the 8-9% of women found in the homeless Veteran population.
- More than **11,119** households with children were served in over 80,400 total households.
- Of those Veterans discharged from the SSVF program, **74%** obtained permanent housing.
- Approximately **\$431 million** in grants was awarded to 258 nonprofit organizations.
- Over **7,845** disposable smartphones have been allocated to SSVF grantees for distribution to homeless or at-risk Veterans receiving services through the SSVF program. This ensures that Veterans remain connected to health care opportunities, caregivers, and support teams — which was especially vital during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program

GPD is VA's largest transitional housing program for Veterans experiencing homelessness. Since 1994, GPD has awarded grants to community-based organizations to provide transitional housing with wraparound supportive services to help vulnerable Veterans move into permanent housing. The grants are designed to meet Veterans at various stages as they move to stable housing. Community-based organizations receiving GPD grants offer focused transitional housing services through a variety of models targeted to different populations and needs of Veterans. GPD plays a vital role in the continuum of homeless services by providing supportive services to those Veterans who would otherwise be among the unsheltered homeless population. Because of GPD, Veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and/or income, and develop greater self-determination. GPD is authorized to award five separate types of grants.

Transitional housing grants include:

- **Per Diem Only (PDO)** grants provide funding in the form of per diem payments that reimburse grantees for the cost of care provided to Veterans in transitional supportive housing.
- **Special Need (SN)** grants target housing and services to specific populations of Veterans (e.g., women, Veterans with chronic mental illness, frail elderly Veterans, Veterans caring for minor dependents, and terminally ill Veterans).
- **Transition-In-Place (TIP)** grants offer Veteran residents housing in which supportive services transition out of the residence over time rather than the resident. Upon completion of the TIP services, the resident retains the unit as their permanent housing with no requirement to move.

Other types of grants include:

- **Case Management (CM)** grants support Veterans who were previously experiencing homelessness or who are at risk for homelessness so that they may obtain or retain permanent housing.
- **Capital grants** support the costs of acquiring, renovating, or constructing facilities and are only offered intermittently to improve existing facilities or to develop new transitional housing, depending on the needs of the department and funding availability.

GPD manages a portfolio of unique grants across every state — as well as Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. — to enhance the flexibility and precision of homeless service delivery through community providers.

In FY 2023, GPD funded approximately 350 PDO grants, 15 SN grants, 40 TIP grants, 115 CM grants, and implemented more than 90 capital improvement grants awarded in

2021 and 2022. Each local community-based organization receiving grants from GPD offers focused services through multiple pathways based on the needs of the Veterans they serve. Through GPD grants, VA can meet the needs of many different Veteran populations experiencing homelessness, including but not limited to women Veterans, Veterans with chronic mental illness, frail elderly Veterans, and Veterans who have care of minor dependents. The grants GPD awards to community organizations make a difference, and their impact is felt across the country.

For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp.

GPD Success Story

From pain and addiction to social worker... with help from VA

Every Veteran who has served the United States of America knows one thing to be true: "Freedom isn't free." For Army Veteran James Sapp, the cost of freedom came in the form of physical injuries — and the treatment plan that resulted in addiction and exacerbated his pain.

After separating from the Army in 2007, Sapp experienced chronic pain, a condition that impacts more than 20% of adults in the United States. Despite the prevalence of chronic pain, there is no cure that works for all individuals.

When opioids were widely promoted as a non-addictive pain management solution in the early aughts, many doctors believed the new medications were the answer for patients like Sapp.

"Desperation" is how Sapp characterizes the catalyst for his first trip to VA. Aware that VA offered [substance use treatment for Veterans](#), he bravely reached out to ask for help. Sapp also asked if VA could help him find a new living arrangement. He was living with his partner in St. Louis—a relationship he described as "toxic"—and needed a healthier arrangement to facilitate his recovery."

Sapp received transitional housing with the help of VA's Grant and Per Diem Program and The H.O.U.S.E. Inc., a Missouri organization offering support for addiction recovery.

To read the full story, visit:

news.va.gov/109540/pain-addiction-social-worker-help-from-va/



GPD is VA's largest transitional housing program with approximately **12,000** beds nationwide.



Over **11,000** homeless Veterans exited GPD to permanent housing.



Over **24,000** Veterans were served by GPD grants. Of those served by GPD, 1,553, or 6%, were women.



Approximately **450** new grants were awarded to community organizations totaling approximately \$257 million for projects starting in FY 2024.

Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) Program

The DCHV program provides intensive residential care for Veterans with complex, co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, medical conditions, and psychosocial needs. Veterans receive medical, mental health, vocational, educational, and other services from interdisciplinary teams with a focus on addressing concerns that inhibit their ability to exit homelessness. The program emphasizes integration into the community with the goal of supporting the Veteran's transition to stability and housing independence following discharge.

For more information, visit www.va.gov/homeless/dchv.asp.



More than **4,200** unique Veterans were served.



Over **1,700** operational beds were located at 43 sites in support of Veterans experiencing homelessness.

Compensated Work Therapy-Transitional Residence (CWT-TR) Program

The CWT-TR program is a unique residential mental health program that provides transitional housing beds in a therapeutic community that focuses on active rehabilitation to aid Veterans in community integration with a focus on both employment and successful transition to housing independence. The work component of the program offers multiple vocational options, leading to job development and placement.

At the end of FY 2023, there were 39 CWT-TR programs with 500 operational beds. Approximately 780 unique Veterans were served in CWT-TR during FY 2023, with five months being a typical length of stay. Among Veterans discharged from the CWT-TR program during FY 2024, more than 50% of those eligible for employment had secured competitive employment at the time of discharge. A smaller subset of Veterans was discharged prior to finding permanent employment but were continuing to pursue vocational goals with the CWT program. During FY 2023, more than 60% of Veterans discharged from CWT-TR were discharged to permanent housing.



EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services (HVCES)

Employment can be a key element in helping Veterans avoid or exit homelessness. VA's employment services help Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness secure and maintain jobs in their communities.

HVCES staff, who are embedded in homeless programs at VA medical centers (VAMCs), complement medical center-based employment services and create a bridge to employment opportunities and resources in the local community. HVCES is staffed by vocational development specialists and vocational rehabilitation counselors who function as community employment coordinators and employment specialists. Community employment coordinators are funded at each VAMC.

The HCHV and HUD-VASH programs have funded employment specialists at a limited number of VAMCs based on local needs. HVCES staff work with VA homeless program and employment services staff, including those working in the VHA Vocational

Rehabilitation/CWT and Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) programs, to identify employment resources for Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, or those who have experienced chronic homelessness. They also collaborate with external community, state, and federal partners, such as the Department of Labor (DOL) [Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program \(HVRP\)](#), to provide training and support services that are not available within VA.

Listen to the Ending Veteran Homelessness podcast episode titled, "[Jobs, Jobs, Jobs.](#)"

For more information on employment services for Veterans experiencing homelessness, visit va.gov/homeless/employment_programs.asp.



Approximately **5,929** Veterans exited residential homeless programs with competitive employment. Residential programs include GPD, Low-Demand Safe Haven, and HCHV Contract Residential Services.



The rate of employment for Veterans housed through HUD-VASH was over **54%**, exceeding the national target by 4%.



There were more than **13,250** newly documented, unique instances of employment for Veterans who engaged in or exited from VA homeless programs or services.

HVCES Success Story

Boston HUD-VASH and HVCES there for Army Veteran

Seven days after walking across the stage for his high school graduation, Robert Wooding was on a plane to Army basic training in Fort Bliss, Texas. After basic training, Wooding headed to Fort Gordon, Georgia, where he worked as a wireman, connecting phones to make sure important messages could be relayed. After transitioning back to civilian life, Wooding got a steady job working for a large telecommunications company. He worked for the company for more than 14 years before receiving devastating news about someone very important to him, news that would alter his life path.

When Wooding learned his mother was diagnosed with lymphoma, he stepped away from his career and stepped up to become her full-time caretaker.

When Wooding's mother died in 2018, he wasn't in a position to buy her house. For the first time, at age 55, he found himself experiencing something he never imagined: homelessness.

He reached out to his local VA where a caseworker directed him to Mass Bay Veterans Center, a 22-bed transitional facility for homeless Veterans which has case management services to help Veterans find permanent and affordable housing.

With help from a social worker at the [VA Boston Healthcare System](#), he was able to secure a HUD-VASH voucher and find permanent housing.

Once he found stable housing, Wooding was ready to find something else: employment.

With the help of the Boston Community Employment Coordinator, he began applying to federal job announcements that piqued his interest. His hard work paid off: Wooding got a job as a program support clerk at the [Jamaica Plain VA Medical Center](#), just minutes away from where he was born.

To read his full story, visit:

news.va.gov/119480/va-homeless-program-there-for-army-veteran/



HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)

Quality health care services are immensely important in the effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans. Veterans whose health is successfully managed can direct their attention to other life needs and goals, including employment, education, caring for their children, and more.

HCHV's mission is to reduce homelessness among Veterans by connecting them with healthcare and other needed services. Through outreach, case management, and Contract Residential Services (CRS), HCHV helps place Veterans experiencing chronic homelessness — especially those with serious mental health diagnoses or substance use disorders — into VA or community-based programs that provide quality housing and services that meet their specific needs.

Section 4201(a) of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (PL 116-315) authorizes the Secretary of VA to use appropriated funds for food, shelter, goods, and services for homeless Veterans or those participating in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program during the Coronavirus pandemic Public Health Emergencies. During this time-limited authority, VAMCs provided life-saving resources such as groceries, clothing, blankets, apartment start-up kits, rental deposits, rideshare vouchers, and smartphones to eligible Veterans. From May 2021 through May 2023, VAMCs across the United States directly helped more than 69,000 Veterans using just over \$13 million in funding through the expanded flexibilities authorized by the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act.

Listen to the Ending Veteran Homelessness podcast episodes titled, "[How VA Helps Unsheltered Veterans Come Inside](#)" and "[Solving the Coordination Problem in Your Community](#)."

For more information about HCHV, visit va.gov/homeless/hchv.asp.



More than **4,900** Veterans exited HCHV CRS programs to permanent housing.



Over **23,800** Veterans received HCHV outreach services.



82 days was the average length of stay in an HCHV CRS program.



Over **9,600** Veterans received HCHV case management.

HCHV Success Story

Using street outreach to help Veterans experiencing homelessness

A handshake. A bottle of water. A "hello" and a pamphlet. These may seem like simple steps when it comes to engaging Veterans experiencing homelessness, but they can make a world of difference.

Homeless Veterans experience many barriers to basic social services and may be hesitant to reach out for help, which is why it is especially important to meet them where they are — often on the streets or in encampments.

Street outreach programs facilitated by VA medical centers (VAMCs) play a vital role in helping Veterans overcome the obstacles that led them to experiencing homelessness. Peer support specialists, health technicians, and program support assistants build trust with Veterans through basic engagement, helping them gain access to services such as temporary housing, resource and referral sites, and outpatient programs.

This type of outreach is exactly what the VA Palo Alto Health Care System has been doing for more than 10 years, serving as a model of what successful outreach can look like.

To read the full story, visit:

news.va.gov/120859/street-outreach-help-veterans-homelessness/

Homeless Patient Aligned Care Teams (HPACTs)

HPACT is an innovative treatment model that VAMCs across the country are implementing to provide a coordinated “medical home” specifically tailored to the needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness. Select VA facilities assign Veterans to an HPACT that includes a primary care provider, a nurse, a social worker, homeless program staff, and others who provide medical and mental health care, case management, housing, and social services. This team provides and coordinates Veterans’ health care along with the services they need to obtain and stay in permanent housing.

Five core elements distinguish HPACT from traditional primary care models, including: (1) reducing barriers to care, (2) providing one-stop, wraparound services that are integrated and coordinated, (3) engaging Veterans in intensive case management, (4) providing high-quality, evidence-based, and culturally sensitive care, and (5) being performance-based and accountable using real-time data.

Veterans enrolled in HPACT experience 19% fewer emergency room visits and 35% fewer hospitalizations, receive care for \$9,379 less per year than a homeless Veteran enrolled in a standard PACT, are able to obtain housing faster, and report more positive patient care experiences.

For more information about HPACTs, visit va.gov/HOMELESS/HPACT.asp.



More than **88** active HPACTS were in operation at 57 VAMCs.



10 of 25 sites launched their new Mobile Medical Units to provide healthcare and supportive services in the community to Veterans experiencing homelessness.



Over **21,500** Veterans were enrolled in HPACT for primary care services.

HPACT Success Story

VA launches mobile medical units to increase access to health care for homeless Veterans

The HPACT National Program Office awarded 25 VA medical centers mobile medical units (MMUs) to provide healthcare and social services to Veterans experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness directly in the community setting.

To read the full story, visit: news.va.gov/press-room/va-launches-mobile-medical-units-to-increase-access-to-health-care-for-homeless-veterans/

Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRC)

VA's CRRCs operate in collaboration with community-based homeless providers and federal and state partners that provide services to Veterans experiencing homelessness. CRRCs provide one-stop access to housing, physical and mental health care, job development programs, and other VA and non-VA services in a central, community-based location with the lowest possible barriers to access.

For more information, visit va.gov/HOMELESS/CRRC.asp.



Over **58,000** Veteran visits were recorded at **33** CRRCs in strategically selected areas across the country.

Homeless Veterans Dental Program (HVDP)

The HVDP promotes oral health for all Veterans who have experienced or are at risk for homelessness. Research shows that the provision of dental care has a substantial positive impact on outcomes among Veterans participating in residential housing intervention programs. Dental care promotes program completion, transition to permanent housing, and employment or financial stability upon program discharge. In FY 2023, VA dental clinics provided more than 79,000 dental procedures to nearly 8,200 Veterans participating in the HVDP.

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Veterans who are enrolled in the following residential rehabilitation programs may be eligible for VA dental care:

- Grant and Per Diem Program.
- Health Care for Homeless Veterans Contracted Residential Services.
- Domiciliary Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment.
- Compensated Work Therapy-Transitional Residences.
- Community Residential Care and Medical Foster Homes.

For more information about dental care for Veterans, read our [informational pamphlet](#).



Nearly **8,200** Veterans were served.

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV)

Veterans who are experiencing homelessness, are at risk of homelessness, or are facing a housing crisis can reach VA 24 hours a day, seven days a week by contacting the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 1-877-424-3838. The call center also takes calls from VAMC staff; federal, state, and local partners; community agencies; service providers; and others in the community who want to make referrals or get more information.

For more information, visit va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp.



More than **203,000** calls were received.



VAMC homeless program staff have responded to over **107,000** referrals from the call center.



VETERANS JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Incarceration is one of the most powerful predictors of homelessness. VA's Veterans Justice Programs (VJP) serve Veterans at any point in their involvement with the criminal justice system, including their reentry into the community following incarceration. The goal of VJP is to provide these Veterans with resources, services, and mental health and other clinical treatment to prevent homelessness and ensure a lasting rehabilitation.

VJP staff conduct outreach in prisons, jails, and court settings. They are also instrumental in the development and sustainment of on-site pro-bono medical legal partnerships and VA-affiliated legal clinics, which address Veterans' health harming civil legal needs. They work with local law enforcement to identify and contact justice-involved Veterans and facilitate their access to VHA mental health, substance use, and homeless services, as well as other VA services and benefits as appropriate.

VJP specialists are highly effective at facilitating access to needed care for justice-involved Veterans. Veterans who receive VJP outreach go on to access VA care at very high rates. Within one year, 91% of Veterans with a mental health disorder entered VA mental health treatment, averaging 12.8 outpatient visits, while 66% of Veterans with a

substance use disorder entered VA substance use disorder treatment, averaging 11.7 outpatient visits.

On June 29, 2023, VA awarded [**\\$11.5 million in legal services grants for Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness**](#) as part of its national homeless prevention efforts.

These first-of-their-kind funds, available through VA's new Legal Services for Veterans Grant Program, were awarded to 79 public or non-profit organizations that help Veterans in several ways, including:

- Providing representation in landlord-tenant disputes to prevent eviction.
- Assisting with court proceedings for child support, custody, or estate planning.
- Helping Veterans obtain public benefits, including disability compensation.
- Defending Veterans in criminal cases that can prolong or increase their risk of homelessness, such as outstanding warrants, fines, or driver's license revocation.
- Assisting with requests to upgrade characterization of discharges or dismissals of former members of the armed forces.

Listen to the Ending Veteran Homelessness podcast episode titled, "[**Helping Justice-Involved Veterans Get Their Second Chance.**](#)"

For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp and va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp.



More than **46,000** justice-involved Veterans received services.



172 pro-bono on-site legal clinics were hosted by VAMCs through partnerships with legal providers.



623 Veterans Treatment Courts and other Veteran-focused court programs were supported.



79 new grants under the new Legal Services for Homeless Veterans and Veterans At-Risk for Homelessness program to serve Veterans in 38 states and the District of Columbia.

VJP Success Story

Former homeless Veteran Billy Truesdell's true colors shine through

Billy Truesdell enlisted in the Navy in 1986 and, for eight years, oversaw hydraulics systems for helicopters and DC-9 aircrafts. He enjoyed the structure and change of scenery the Navy offered, particularly when visiting foreign ports such as London and Sicily.

After getting out of the Navy and experiencing a bout of homelessness, he found the place he belongs most: helping other Veterans. But finding that home wasn't an easy journey.

After being charged with driving under the influence, Truesdell was given the opportunity to participate in a Veteran's Treatment Court, which provides Veterans with the chance to receive treatment to address unmet clinical needs in lieu of incarceration. What began as a consequence of his DUI turned out to be an important step toward changing his life.

To read the full story, visit: news.va.gov/111048/former-homeless-veteran-billy-truesdells-true-colors-shine-through/



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV)

In January 2023, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs appointed 13 new members and reappointed two members to the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV). The Advisory Committee Management Office complemented our diverse membership balance plan for its representation of varied geographic areas, races, genders, and backgrounds. Members from the following groups were represented: Veterans service organizations, advocates of homeless Veterans and other homeless individuals, community-based providers of services to homeless individuals, previously homeless Veterans, state Veterans affairs officials, experts in the treatment of individuals with mental illness, experts in the treatment of substance use disorders, experts in the development of permanent housing alternatives for lower income populations, experts in vocational rehabilitation, and other organizations or groups as the Secretary considers appropriate. Other members include representatives from nine federal agencies (Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, Department of Education, Department of

Defense, Department of Justice, and the United States Department of Agriculture) that serve as ex-officio Members.

The committee provides advice and recommendations in its Annual Report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the challenges faced related to VA's current priorities and strategic goals. These challenges are typically framed within the context of providing greater choice, modernizing systems, increasing efficiency, improving timeliness, preventing suicide, and efforts to improve delivery of VA services to organically improve outcomes for homeless Veterans. The committee also convened its annual public meetings in April and September 2023 to provide an ongoing assessment of policies, organization structures, and services while providing proposed recommendations related to the following topics:

- Augmenting staffing and peer support initiatives.
- Improving the collective understanding of how Veteran readiness and employment benefits support Veterans experiencing and at risk of homelessness.
- Enhancing VHA partnerships related to transitioning service members and suicide prevention.

The committee and VA share a common mission to ensure all Veterans — regardless of gender, age, race, or disability — are provided with programs and services to aid their rehabilitation and reintegration into society as fully functioning citizens. Hence, they continue the sacred duty to reach out and assist Veterans in their immediate and long-term efforts to rejoin society.

For more information, visit: www.va.gov/homeless/achv.

Office of Community Engagement

The Office of Community Engagement serves as a trusted resource and catalyst for the growth of effective partnerships at the national, state, and community levels. It also serves as a facilitator and access point for public and private entities interested in partnering with HPO to enhance supportive services and resources for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Community Engagement works with VA's Office of Strategic Partnerships, Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, and a contractor to develop communication tools, partnership referrals, and strategic messaging to make Veterans who are homeless aware of services available to them. This approach also targets VA employees; national, state, and local organizations; and other interested stakeholders.

- **Bombas donated 100,000 socks to homeless Veterans.**
 - Bombas donates and distributes socks to VA homeless programs every year to provide comfort and positive health outcomes to Veterans as they work to achieve housing stability and independence. In FY 2023, Bombas donated over 100,000 pairs of socks to VAMCs and community partners. The partnership has grown in scope and membership over the years. In 2021, Veterans United Home

Loans joined the team to help donate even more socks to Veterans experiencing homelessness. By growing the list of donation locations that cater specifically to Veterans, VA is one step closer to reaching its goal of donating socks to every homeless Veteran in the United States.

- **Community Solutions helped house over 7,000 Veterans through Built for Zero.**
 - Built for Zero is a movement of 107 communities working to measurably and equitably end homelessness — and prove it is possible. In FY 2023, Built for Zero helped house over 7,000 homeless Veterans. Additionally, since 2015, 14 communities have reached Functional Zero, ending Veteran homelessness in those communities, and 99,000 Veterans have been housed.
- **DoorDash and Zoomo helped 13 Veterans increase their income.**
 - As part of a new pilot partnership in Los Angeles and San Francisco to help Veterans maximize their income, DoorDash and Zoomo donated 23 e-bikes to help 13 Veterans increase their income, earning a total of over \$13,600 through food delivery.
- **Veterans Matter helped nearly 1,800 Veterans.**
 - Veterans Matter provides deposit or down payment assistance to HUD-VASH Veterans. They operate in 32 states, including Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas, and have helped more than 8,300 Veterans to date. In FY 2023, they helped 1,796 Veterans.

Status Query and Response Exchange System (SQUARES)

VA remains committed to ending Veteran homelessness and making it rare, brief, and non-reoccurring. Finding and securing affordable housing can be an uphill battle for Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Achieving the goal of ending homelessness requires a collective effort by VA, homeless service community partners, criminal justice agencies (police, sheriff departments, courts, and jails), and local, state, and federal agencies. Many of our partners are the first to encounter a Veteran experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

In the past, confirming a Veteran's eligibility for VA homeless program services was a lengthy process, but Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness often need immediate assistance. To streamline this process, VA developed SQUARES, a secure VA web application that provides VA and external homeless service organizations with reliable, detailed information about Veteran eligibility. Users submit identity attributes for homeless individuals (i.e., name, date of birth, Social Security number, and gender) and SQUARES returns information regarding their Veteran status and eligibility for homeless programs. The tool facilitates quick and simple access to care for homeless and at-risk Veterans.

For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/squares/ and watch our [SQUARES overview video](#) and [SQUARES demonstration video](#).

- More than **3,200** active users as of September 30, 2023.
- Over **394,000** queries processed as of September 30, 2023.

Stand Downs

Stand downs are one- to three-day events held by community agencies in partnership with VA to provide Veterans experiencing homelessness with essential services and support, including health screenings, VA and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other services, such as housing, employment, and substance use disorder treatment. For more information, visit va.gov/homeless/events.asp.



241 Stand Downs served more than
44,653 Veterans.

Project CHALENG (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups)

Project CHALENG brings together VA, community agencies, and other federal, state, and local government offices that provide homeless services to assess and develop plans to meet the needs of Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness. CHALENG includes two components: CHALENG meetings and the CHALENG survey, which includes the perspectives of Veterans and those of VA and community service providers.

In calendar year 2022, 4,403 individuals completed a CHALENG participant survey. This included 1,992 homeless Veterans and 2,411 providers and other stakeholders, including VA staff, state and public officials, community leaders, and volunteers. The 2023 survey results revealed that Veteran needs that have been primarily met involve services that VHA can provide directly, whereas most unmet needs require community partnership support to fulfill.

To find more information about the project, see full details of the top 10 unmet needs for Veterans, and learn the demographics of survey participants, visit www.va.gov/homeless/chaleng.asp.



INTERAGENCY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Outreach Program

VBA has dedicated Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators (HVOCs) at all 56 regional offices who provide access to VA benefits and information for Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. VBA also has Homeless Veterans Claims Coordinators (HVCCs) in all 56 regional offices. HVCCs label, control, and expedite the processing of claims from Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, including those involved with the criminal justice system. In FY 2023, VBA personnel participated in 3,164 outreach events to assist Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including justice-involved Veterans.

Additionally, VBA contributed to the development of a memorandum of understanding between VA and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The memorandum provides a framework by which VA can provide information and access to services for BOP inmates who are Veterans as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 101(2), or who have submitted a claim to VA for a benefit for which status as a Veteran is required.

- In FY 2023, VBA expedited 33,521 compensation claims for Veterans experiencing homelessness, with an average completion time of 90 days.
- In FY 2023, VBA expedited 1,557 pension claims for Veterans experiencing homelessness, with an average completion time of 66 days.

Excess Property for Homeless Veterans Initiative

This program allows for the distribution of the federal government's excess personal property, including sleeping bags, hats, coats, and footwear, to Veterans experiencing homelessness. The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) distributes most of this surplus property, requisitioned by HPO, at Stand Downs conducted by community partners.

- VA approved 4,128 total clothing requisitions.

Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance

VA works with loan servicers to help borrowers with VA guaranteed loans from the Loan Guaranty Service avoid foreclosure.

- In FY 2023, VBA saved over 145,000 borrowers from foreclosure, avoiding more than \$2.62 billion in potential claim payments.
- In FY 2023, VBA program staff made over 586,000 calls to Veterans and their servicers.



RESEARCH

National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV)

NCHAV, established in 2009 and codified by section 713 of the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016, conducts research, model development, education, and policy analysis to promote recovery-oriented care for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Activities include assessing the effectiveness of programs; identifying and disseminating best practices to integrate into policies, programs, and services for Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness; and serving as a resource for all research and training carried out by VA and other federal and nonfederal entities with respect to Veteran homelessness.

Research:

- Maintained a pool of 35 affiliated researchers for which NCHAV serves as a national resource with more than 40 peer-reviewed studies. Through these partnerships, NCHAV communicates operational priorities, sets strategic initiatives, and helps foster collaboration and synergy among researchers focused on the causes of homelessness.

- Continued to help produce the next generation of investigators with research expertise in Veteran homelessness by offering a postdoctoral fellowship program in collaboration with the VA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA).
- This postdoctoral fellowship program provides focused training experiences for health professionals interested in addressing homelessness and criminal justice involvement. One fellow completed the NCHAV fellowship in FY2023, and two new fellows started this fiscal year. Fellows who graduate move to federal and nonfederal positions to further the VA's mission to address homelessness and improve Veteran health.
- Generated over 40 peer-reviewed research publications on homelessness among Veterans and 5 research briefs that enhance evidence-based knowledge of effective programs and services to address Veteran homelessness. Major projects undertaken this year include:
 - Evaluation of VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans as a homeless prevention approach.
 - Surveillance of evictions and home foreclosures, which are pathways to homelessness among Veterans.
 - Potential to use telehealth to reach Veterans in the HUD-VASH program. Findings from these studies have been used to inform ongoing program development in VA program offices and policies to support Veteran health.
- Administered 4 intramural grants to research affiliates in diverse geographies to examine racial disparities, spiritual well-being, chronic medical needs, and social determinants of health among Veterans experiencing homelessness and at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- Maintained a Veteran research engagement panel of 12 Veterans with lived experiences of homelessness to advise and provide input on 6 research projects.
- Presented 11 research-focused educational events, whose goals included translating research findings into practice for national audiences of VA, federal partners, and community providers.

Education & Model Development:

- **Enhancing the knowledge and skills of homeless program staff.**
NCHAV provided 14 national educational events on critical mission topics, such as women Veterans' health care, staff burnout, diversity, medical legal partnerships for older adults in patient care, and Veteran suicide risk. These events were attended by more than 3,900 participants in an effort to enhance knowledge, skills, and competencies of VA staff working with Veterans experiencing and at risk of homelessness.

- **Optimizing use of occupational therapy (OT) in HUD-VASH.**

NCHAV partnered with the HUD-VASH Program, VISN 21, and the Office of Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services to develop strategies to optimize the use of OT in HUD-VASH with the goal of improving services and outcomes for HUD-VASH's prematurely aging population. A stepwise model was developed to standardize the OT workflow within HUD-VASH. The initial phase of the model involved intake screening for early recognition of factors compromising housing success and timely referrals to OT for evaluation and treatment. This intake screen was piloted at two sites. A report was written that describes how the pilot was conceived and implemented, lessons learned, and considerations for next steps.

- **Integrating models of trauma-informed care into homeless program services.**

NCHAV and the Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) National Program are collaborating to replicate two linked promising practices currently operating at the VA Boston HCHV program: the Care Coordination, Advocacy, Treatment, and Connections to Housing (CATCH) program and the Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Integration Initiative. Using a trauma-informed approach, CATCH serves Veterans experiencing homelessness who have high needs and treatment costs, and face complex challenges in obtaining and retaining housing due to chronic serious mental illness and/or substance use. The TIC Integration Initiative is a training and technical assistance model for incorporating trauma-informed care principles into homeless programs at the VAMC level. Both models are being replicated in FY 2024 at two VAMCs.

To find more information about the Center's activities visit

www.va.gov/homeless/nchav.

Conclusion

While homeless and at-risk Veterans faced several challenges during FY 2023, VA continued to work tirelessly to ensure that all Veterans and their families have a safe, stable place to call home and access to essential services to promote healthy lives. The steady increase in the number of communities effectively ending homelessness among Veterans is proof that preventing and ending homelessness for all Veterans is achievable.

Throughout FY 2023, our collaborations with interagency offices and external stakeholders brought to light many promising practices and significantly contributed to VA's ability to move the needle toward preventing and ending homelessness among Veterans. These strategic partnerships remain essential, because there are critical needs and gaps in services that VA legally cannot fulfill.

As this report shows, each VA homeless program demonstrated its commitment to preventing and ending Veteran homelessness by delivering high-quality services that work to support the well-being and success of our nation's heroes.

