

AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



People who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) alone or in combination with another race accounted for 2.9% of the total United States population in 2020, or 9.7 million people. This [represents a 160% increase in this population](#) from 2010 to 2020.

This community serves in the military at a higher rate per capita than any other race or ethnicity, with [more than 140,000 Veterans identifying as AI/AN](#), constituting 0.7% of approximately 18.3 million Veterans – and yet, they are [proportionally over-represented per capita](#) in the population of Veterans facing homelessness

HOMELESSNESS IN AI/AN COMMUNITIES

Too often, AI/AN Veterans do not access or are unaware of the support available to end their homelessness.

ISSUES FACED BY AI/AN HOMELESS COMMUNITIES



Over-represented per capita in homelessness



Under-identified in homelessness counts



Higher rates of overcrowded housing



Lack of communication on how to get assistance

AI/AN Veterans are often under-identified in homelessness counts due to the [difficulty of obtaining accurate data](#) on homelessness within AI/AN land. A reservation itself is often considered “home” to these populations, so [many AI/AN Veterans do not consider themselves homeless](#) but rather houseless.

For many living in rural areas and reservations, street homelessness is less common, which renders homelessness less visible and more difficult to identify.

For AI/AN households in urban areas, there is often overcrowding, with too many people trying to live in too small a home. [Veterans staying in these accommodations may not consider themselves homeless](#), even though their housing isn’t stable or their own.

In addition, AI/AN Veterans who go to urban areas to seek medical care [may end up stranded in the city without housing](#), which can lead to tragic consequences.

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“Homelessness manifests itself differently in rural settings where individuals are less inclined to experience literal homelessness, and more likely to live in substandard housing or stay with friends or relatives for long periods of time, often in very crowded conditions.

[Counting Homelessness on Tribal Lands | SAMHSA](#)

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WHAT VA IS DOING

AI/AN Veterans often have [limited knowledge about VHA services](#) or eligibility for care. To combat this, VA and HUD’s Office of Native American Programs (ONAP) work together to promote the [Tribal Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing \(Tribal HUD-VASH\) program](#). This program provides rental assistance and supportive services to AI/AN Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness living on or near a reservation or other tribal areas.

VA is committed to delivering high-quality, equitable care to AI/AN Veterans, and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health care. VA’s homeless programs are promoting increased AI/AN cultural competency by providing cultural education opportunities for VA staff and forming collaborations with agencies who directly serve AI/AN communities.

The Indian Health Service and the Department of Veterans Affairs launched a [new interagency map application](#) to increase access to health care, community-based resources, and other essential services for AI/AN Veterans.

These services, as well as the standard HUD-VASH program, are designed to help homeless Veterans and their families find and sustain permanent housing and access health care, mental health treatment, substance use counseling, and other supports as necessary to help them gain stability and maintain housing in the community. Read more about the [resources available to Native American Veterans through VA](#).

RESOURCES FOR VETERANS

- [Resources for Native American Veterans Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#)
- [Indian Housing’s Office of Native American Programs \(ONAP\)](#)
- [Find Health Care & Resources for Native Veterans](#)
- [Tribal HUD-VASH](#)
- [Urban Indian Organizations](#)