

The Homeless Programs Office (HPO) newsletter contains news and information about VA's ongoing effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.



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Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.

Message From Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office



The parades and green hues of St. Patrick's Day may get most of the attention in March, but there are other occasions that we would be remiss to forget.

In addition to both Social Work Month and Women's History Month, we're commemorating the 30th anniversary of [Project CHALENG](#), one of the longest running initiatives in our Homeless Programs Office.

Project CHALENG (short for Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education, and Networking Groups) started in 1994, back when

homeless programs at VA were still very young. The hallmark of the initiative is an annual survey, which has helped grow our homeless programs into what they are today.

We've learned a lot through the survey results—like what is working, what isn't working, and what needs haven't been met. It has helped us pivot our programs

toward effectively serving Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Project CHALENG contributed to the development of the [Homeless Veterans Dental Program](#), free [legal services](#) to help remove obstacles to being housed, and the [Supportive Services for Veteran Families](#) grant program. One of the most eye-opening parts of the survey is the opportunity to hear directly from Veterans about what they believe would help them find permanent housing.

[Read more.](#)

Around HPO

[VA announces goal to house 41,000+ Veterans experiencing homelessness in 2024](#)

On March 14, 2024, VA announced its fiscal year 2024 goals in support of its efforts to prevent and end Veteran homelessness. The new goals focus on permanently housing homeless Veterans, preventing returns to homelessness, and engaging with unsheltered Veterans. [Read the press release.](#)



[HUD and VA Award \\$14 Million to Help Homeless Veterans Find Permanent Housing.](#)

One Veteran experiencing homelessness will always be one too many. To aid in the fight to end Veteran homelessness, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and VA have awarded \$14 million in housing vouchers to help homeless Veterans access safe, stable permanent housing. [Read the press](#)

[release.](#)

[VA Medical Centers Focus on Helping Unsheltered Veterans](#)

Seeing a recent rise in the number of unsheltered homeless Veterans, six VA medical centers surged into action, increasing outreach to homeless encampments, bus stations, and other areas to identify Veterans in need of housing. [Read more.](#)



[Project CHALENG Marks 30th Anniversary](#)

The hallmark of this long-running initiative is an annual survey that assesses the needs of homeless Veterans and helps us evolve our services to fight homelessness more effectively.



[Read our blog](#) or [listen to an Ending Veteran Homelessness podcast episode](#) with Jessica Blue-Howells, deputy director of Veterans Justice Programs.

Programs.

[Homeless Navy Veteran Receives VA Housing Support](#)

Women’s History Month recognizes the achievements of women, many of which don’t make the news but are no less noteworthy.

[Read the story](#) of Navy Veteran Margarita Belmarez, who overcame homelessness caused by devastating hurricanes—not once, but twice.



[Honoring VA’s Hardworking Social Workers](#)

Social workers are our heroes! This Social Work Month, we’d like to recognize the thousands of VA social workers around the country who stand up for Veterans and support the cause of ending Veteran homelessness. [See how we empower social workers.](#)

[HPO Speaks on UCLA Housing Voice Podcast](#)

How has Veteran homelessness fallen by more than half since 2009 while overall homelessness in the U.S. hasn’t changed? Monica Diaz, executive director of the VA Homeless Programs Office, and Shawn Liu, director of communications, discuss why on the *UCLA Housing Voice* podcast. [Listen here.](#)



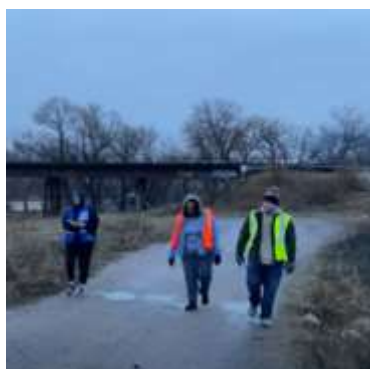
[USICH Wants Your Input on Homelessness Prevention Strategies](#)

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) is [seeking examples](#) of effective, innovative ways that communities are working to prevent homelessness. Responses are due by March 20, 2024. [Submit your information.](#)

[Get Rental Assistance Through Shallow Subsidy Services Program](#)



One of the many ways Veterans can get housing help from VA is through the Shallow Subsidy Services program. Veterans enrolled in the Supportive Service for Veteran Families program may be eligible for rental assistance for up to 24 months. [Explore the program.](#)



[Dole VA Medical Center Documents Work to End Veteran Homelessness](#)

Follow along as the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center partners with the City of Wichita and the United Way of the Plains to survey homeless Veterans. They're doing their part to end Veteran homelessness in Wichita, Kansas. [Watch the video.](#)

Health Update

Good nutrition can not only benefit your personal health—it can benefit the planet.

This year's National Nutrition Month is focused on reducing food waste, and [Nutrition and Food Services at VA](#) has developed [some tips](#) to help you reduce you reduce waste and save money, including:

- Growing some of your own food
- Adding plant-based foods to your diet
- Eating seasonal produce when available
- Planning meals ahead



[Schedule an appointment](#) with a VA dietitian to learn sustainable eating habits that incorporate nutritious foods that meet your individual goals. Learn more about how VA's new [Food Security Office](#) supports Veteran comprehensive health and wellbeing by ensuring food security.

HPO Staff Spotlight: Dixon McReynolds

This year, we're spotlighting VA's Housing First approach through a series of interviews with VA employees and taking a look at how they're working to end Veteran homelessness through Housing First. Learn more about [Housing First](#).

After decades of working with the homeless community, Dixon McReynolds has seen how effectively VA's Housing First approach is working to end Veteran homelessness. A Veteran himself,

