

Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV)

**April 16, 2024
Asheville, North Carolina
9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. EST**

Minutes

The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) convened a public meeting, which primarily focused on programmatic updates from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Federal agencies and community partners on April 16, 2024 in Asheville, NC.

Committee Members -- Present

Brandon Wilson, ACHV Chair

Ann Oliva, ACHV Vice Chair

Dr. Robert E. Accordino

Dr. Toni Jackman

Patrice Livingston

Thomas J. Lyons

Wendy McClinton

Kathryn C. Monet

Dawanta Parks

Quandrea Patterson

Josh Protas

Colonel D.J. Reyes

Darryl J. Vincent

Donald Whitehead

T. Evonne Williams

Ex Officio Members – Present

Dr. Susan Black, Program Director, Suicide Prevention, Veterans Benefits Administration, VA

Jemine Bryon, Community Planning and Development, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Needs, Department of Housing and Urban Development

Yashika D. Neaves, Ph.D. Department of Defense, Chief, Strategic Plans and Initiatives, Military-Civilian Transition Office, Defense Support Services Center, Defense Human Resources Activity

Committee Support Staff - Present

Anthony Love, Designated Federal Officer, ACHV, VHA Homeless Program Office (HPO)

Leisa Davis, Alternate Designated Federal Officer, VHA HPO

Other Attendees – Present

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| Ash Ahsanuddin | Deb Lee |
| Jemima Anglade | Shawn Liu |
| Philip Blanton | Meredith Malpass |
| Jessica Blue-Howells | Adrienne Nash Melendez |
| Blake Bourne | T. Nelson |
| Fran Bryson | Lori Noonan |
| Sean Clark | Clarence Payton |
| Steve Cole | Christie Reviere |
| Daniel Conway | Jessica Rice |
| Jessica Case | Kevin Rumley |
| Ryan Donohue | Monshi Ramdass |
| Rose Dunaway | Makedah Salmond |
| Christina Ennis | Joe Savage |
| Marion Fera (She/her) | Ashleigh Schaub |
| David Forgosh | Cindy Spencer |
| Madolyn Gingell | Katie Stewart |
| Antonio Harris | Matthew Stimmel |
| Wynnie Hathaway | Maria Temiquel |
| Kay Holtzinger | Roberta Todd |
| | Chelsea Watson |
| | Elizabeth Whittington |

Opening Session

Brandon Wilson, Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV) Chair called the meeting to order and took roll call for the Committee.

Ann Oliva, ACHV Vice Chair thanked the presenters/attendees and provided a brief overview of the agenda topics that would be covered during the meeting.

Morning Presentations

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs' video was shown that provides:

- overview of the importance of Advisory Committees
- work the Advisory Committee do to assist Veterans
- focus on Veterans' outcomes through data

Subject matter experts from various organizations (VHA Homeless Programs and Asheville VA Medical Center), provided an overview of their operational updates and commitment to understanding the unique needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness and at risk of homelessness to identify and understand challenges to develop plans, monitor progress and take action.

In a moderated panel session, the Veterans with Lived Experience Panel (comprised of two females and two males Veterans) shared personal stories and provided some opportunities for improvement.

Some common themes in the Veterans' personal stories:

- Veterans did not know they may be eligible for VA healthcare and they did not have anyone to assist them with applying for VA services
- They did not connect to VA until 2-10 years after discharge when they were referred by family, friend, another Veteran
- If they had information about VA programs (after discharge), they would have contacted VA earlier
- Mental health, substance abuse, and/or incarceration contributed to them becoming homeless

The Veterans provided the following opportunities for improvements:

- Provide a program to check on Veterans virtually or in person (after discharge to offer assistance with navigating from military to civilian life and eliminating barriers associated with criminal records, income limitations, and mental health, substance abuse challenges)
- Provide transportation (RideShare)
- Provide information on Home Ownership Programs
- Address racial discrimination, diversity, inclusion challenges
- Expand outreach to share more information about VA Services (before exiting the military and incarceration)
- Show more compassion and customer service when meeting with Veterans
- Provide more affordable housing (Consider Veterans Only Apartment Housing Complexes)
- Ask Veterans to share their stories with other Veterans about how they use VA Services
- Stress the vital role of Peer Support Specialists and the need to hire more Veterans in this area that have lived experience)
- Provide more collaborative VA and community outreach efforts
- Provide targeted outreach to assist Women Veterans
- Provide assistance with navigating and enrolling into VA programs

Notably, they mentioned the following programs helped them the most:

- Veterans Services of the Carolina
- Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry
- Veterans Restoration Quarters)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH)
- Grant and Per Diem (GPD)
- Veterans Treatment Court
- Peer Support Program
- VA homeless programs and community collaboration were instrumental with acquiring assistance to flee domestic violence

The Committee recessed from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. for lunch.

Afternoon Presentations

Subject matter experts from the Veterans Justice Program provided an overview on the following topics: Legal Services for Veterans, Deflection Training and Efforts, and Peer Support and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness provided an overview on prevention efforts.

In a moderated panel session, the Asheville Community Partners (Buncombe County Veterans Treatment Court, Veterans Bridge Home, Veterans Services of the Carolinas) provided an overview of their operational updates and commitment to understanding the unique needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness and at risk of homelessness by working with VA and community-based partnerships to identify and understand challenges to develop improvements, monitor progress and take action.

The community partners work collaboratively to cover every dimension of Veterans' lives (housing, healthcare, benefits, transportation, etc) in an effort to empower and support them so they can be successful in their communities. The community partners commended VA for doing an amazing job during the pandemic to support their programs and they mentioned they would love to see those same level of resources (like transportation, essential needs, phones, etc) again.

The following items were cited areas where assistance is needed: further empowering and strengthening of community and VA Medical Center partnerships, more flexible funding to support various homeless programs, more project-based vouchers, more resources to support the needs of aging Veterans, utilization of data (predictive and preventive models), partnering with Veterans Service Organizations and community partners to fill transportation gaps, offer more guidance and peer support to Veterans that are transitioning from military to civilian life.

The Committee recessed for the day at 4:30 p.m.

Summary of Committee Requests for Information and Responses:

The Homeless Program Office will work with the appropriate points of contact to acquire information and share them with the Committee. The next meeting will be held in Denver, CO in September 2024. The meeting logistics will be published in the Federal Register.

Adjournment

Brandon Wilson, Chair, ACHV adjourned the meeting on April 16, 2024. I hereby certify, that to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

/s/Brandon Wilson,
Chair, Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans