

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Homeless Programs Office

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2029

TOGETHER,
WE CAN END
VETERAN
HOMELESSNESS!

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration

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Introduction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



As we plan for the future of the Homeless Programs Office (HPO) of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), we are dedicated to accelerating our progress toward ending Veteran homelessness by increasing access to permanent housing and offering programs, services, and treatments that provide Veterans with a sense of dignity, belonging, personal empowerment, and independence. And there's strong evidence to suggest that our efforts are working.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), data show that on a single night in January 2024, [32,882 Veterans experienced homelessness in America](#) — a record low in Veteran homelessness since measurement began in

2009. The data also show a 7.5% decrease in Veteran homelessness since 2023, an 11.7% decrease since 2020, and a 55.6% decrease since 2010. This comes at a time when [overall homelessness in America is at an all-time high](#).

Our network of community partnerships and providers, our [bold and ambitious initiatives](#), the implementation of evidence based approaches with comprehensive supportive services and treatment, and VA staff's relentless dedication and hard work have directly led to this reduction. We encourage you to read our [Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report](#) to read more about what VA delivered for homeless Veterans.

But our work is not done, and more effort is needed to further reduce Veteran homelessness. This strategic plan effort aims to accelerate the reduction of the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness. Preventing and ending Veteran homelessness requires a comprehensive approach that is supported by every level of government and is effectively resourced with a wide array of service and treatment options. The success we've seen with Veterans shows that we have the right solutions that could be used as a blueprint for ending overall homelessness in America.

The HPO strategic plan aligns with the administration's current priorities and incorporates key lessons learned from our ongoing efforts to serve Veterans. As you read through the objectives and strategies outlined in the updated plan, consider what steps you can take to help us achieve our goals. We cannot end Veteran homelessness alone; support from our community partners and stakeholders is critical. Together, we are committed to refining and purposing our objectives and strategies to take advantage of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure every Veteran has a safe and stable place to call home.

I invite you to join us on this journey. Together, we can end Veteran homelessness.

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CONTRIBUTORS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

HPO would like to acknowledge the following groups and organizations whose contributions have been vital to the initial and ongoing development of this strategic planning document:

- **Homeless Programs Office Staff.** Staff from HPO’s various sections and programs provided information and insight.
- **VA Stakeholders.** Countless VHA Network Homeless Coordinators and other VA and VHA leadership participants have helped create content.
- **Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ACHV).** ACHV operates under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. ACHV advises and makes recommendations to the Secretary of VA and Congress on benefits and services provided to Veterans experiencing homelessness and other issues affecting this population.
- **National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH).** NAEH is a nonprofit organization whose sole purpose is to end homelessness in the United States. NAEH uses research and data to find solutions to homelessness, works with federal and local partners to create a solid base of policy and resources that support those solutions, and helps communities implement them.
- **Community Solutions.** Community Solutions is a nonprofit that leads Built for Zero, a movement of more than 110 cities and counties that use data to radically change how they work, achieve impact, and prove it is possible to make homelessness rare and brief. To propel this movement to end homelessness, partners work with communities to solve the most persistent challenges that stand in the way.
- **National Coalition on Homeless Veterans (NCHV).** NCHV is a nonprofit organization that serves as a resource and technical assistance center for a national network of community-based service providers and local, state, and federal agencies that provide emergency and supportive housing, food, health services, job training, placement assistance, legal aid, and case management for Veterans experiencing homelessness.
- **University of California, San Francisco’s Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative.** Their “Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness” has helped inform updates to our strategic plans.



**Each Veteran is
our collective
responsibility.**

Section 1: Mission, Vision, Values

MISSION STATEMENT

Through our effective and agile response, we ensure that Veterans and their families **obtain permanent and sustainable housing** with access to supportive services and treatment that are Veteran-centered and lead to personal empowerment.

VISION STATEMENT

We work toward **ending homelessness for all Veterans and their families** using evidence-based, innovative practices and partnerships to provide access to permanent housing and deliver Veteran-centered services and treatment, leading to personal empowerment and increased independence..

HOMELESS PROGRAMS OFFICE (HPO) CORE VALUES

HPO's core values — **H.P.O. C.A.R.E.S** — embrace VA's I CARE values and are embodied in everything we do in pursuit of our mission.

HOME: We believe that ending homelessness starts by rapidly moving Veterans to housing with **supportive services and treatments** that are responsive to the needs of each Veteran and their family.

PARTNERSHIPS: We **engage in meaningful federal, state, and local partnerships** that enhance access to care and improve service coordination.

OWNERSHIP: We practice **integrity** through each one of our actions, and we do what we say we will do.

COMMITMENT: We commit to ensuring access to **eliminating barriers** to housing.

ADVOCACY: We advocate for **immediate and long-term solutions** that challenge the status quo and foster policies to serve all homeless populations equally.

RESPECT: We **respect the right to self-determination** among Veterans and their families by demonstrating a high regard for their values, preferences, and needs.

EXCELLENCE: We achieve excellence by understanding that **each Veteran is our collective responsibility** and by applying a One Team¹ approach toward the common mission.

SERVICE: We provide exceptional **mission-driven customer service** to all who we interact with, including Veterans and their families, stakeholders, community partners, colleagues, and staff.

1. HPO's One Team integrative approach refers to coordinated, united actions among programs toward a joint mission. The principles of breaking down silos and encouraging cross-skilled work yield demonstrable benefits in the quality and speed of service delivery for Veterans. va.gov/homeless/oneteam-toolkit.asp

Until no Veteran experiences the tragedy and indignity of homelessness — and every Veteran has a safe, stable, accessible, and affordable home.

Section 2: HPO's Pillars

HPO's practices, programs, and services are centered on three pillars: outreach, housing solutions, and supportive services. Each pillar has two key foundations: data and research and community partnerships.



These pillars are foundational to the many homeless programs and services HPO has established over the years to meet the needs of homeless Veterans and their families. HPO programs that fall under these pillars are described in the following section. Details regarding these programs can be found in the [HPO Fact Sheet](#).



**Our work reflects
our values.**

Section 3: Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

HOMELESS PROGRAMS OFFICE GOALS

Success in ending Veteran homelessness is reflected in continued declines in the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless Veterans as reported by HUD's Point-in-Time (PIT) Count as well as through increases in the number of Veterans who have been prevented from experiencing homelessness.

To continue to reduce the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in America, in FY 2025, HPO will focus on:

- **Moving even more homeless Veterans into permanent housing.**
- **Preventing Veterans from returning to homelessness.**
- **Engaging with more unsheltered Veterans to help them obtain housing and access other wraparound services.**

The One Team Operational Framework is powered by four strategic priorities—essential values and behaviors needed to truly end Veteran homelessness.



REACH EVERY CORNER: Comprehensive outreach for all

VA and its community partners conduct comprehensive, coordinated outreach activities to identify and support Veterans who are unsheltered, living in encampments, in cars, or in other places not meant for human habitation. Programs actively engage in outreach and in-reach services, often in concert with Veteran Service Organizations and other Veterans, to ensure all Veterans are offered direct access to services.



NO DELAY, NO DENIAL: Same-day access for every Veteran

VA programs are directed to ensure that Veterans, particularly those sleeping outside, can quickly be placed into VA-funded or community shelter or interim housing beds. VA's Same-Day Access policy mandates that VA homeless programs lower barriers to entry and adjust service approaches to meet the needs of those Veterans who may not otherwise be likely to engage in shelter, transitional, or permanent housing programs. VA also provides rapid links to housing programs to expedite permanent housing placement.



FAST-TRACK HOUSING: Enrollment strategies for immediate move-in

All Veterans should be immediately connected to programs, including complementary services across multiple programs, that can help Veterans obtain permanent housing. VA's programs use the most readily available permanent housing pathway based on individual Veterans' needs and desires. VA emphasizes the opportunities that exist when Veterans engage in more than one program so VA and the community can match complementary services and provider expertise focused on each individual Veteran, within local capacity.



BEYOND HOUSING: Empowering Veterans with tenancy through VA support

Veterans entering permanent housing must be provided with the services, tools, and case management support to keep that housing over the long term. VA is committed to ensuring Veterans are quickly connected to resources such as community or VA health care, behavioral health care, benefits, case management, and other services needed to help them sustain their housing, achieve positive health outcomes, and integrate into their community.

Additionally, HPO is deploying its One Team Operational Framework through strategic partnerships and strengthened collaborations with internal VA and external partners.

HPO OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

To achieve VA's goals to end and prevent Veteran homelessness, the following seven objectives have been identified as key to propelling HPO's vision and mission forward. These objectives and strategies will be reassessed annually and updated as appropriate.

OBJECTIVE 1: Increase access to affordable permanent housing options.

Strategies to achieve the objective:

- 1.1** Enhance integration between HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) programs to increase voucher use and accelerate housing placements.
- 1.2** Promote effective interagency policy developments and implementations that increase rental housing affordability and alleviate the cost burden for homeless Veterans and their families.
- 1.3** Promote and advance the availability of affordable housing through HUD-VASH project-based voucher development and targeted availability or rental subsidies.
- 1.4** Ensure all VA homeless programs provide a coordinated response that prioritizes permanent housing placements using Housing First principles.
- 1.5** Increase the use of housing navigation services.

OBJECTIVE 2: Expand targeted prevention services and resolve returns to homelessness.

Strategies to achieve the objective:

- 2.1** Increase Veterans' access to legal services, including eviction prevention and landlord mediation, through legal services grants and community partnerships.
- 2.2** Enhance income and financial stability through evidence-based employment supports (e.g., training, transportation) and affirmative outreach to support increasing receipt of benefits.
- 2.3** Leverage and apply national flexibilities through the SSVF Shallow Subsidy services to meet the needs of extremely low-income Veterans and their households.
- 2.4** Apply our One Team approach to deliver agile, comprehensive homeless programs, supportive services, and treatments to help Veterans access care to prevent and resolve their homelessness.
- 2.5** Lead initiatives and efforts in partnership with law enforcement, prisons, jails, and other VA stakeholders to reduce the risk of returns to homelessness for justice-involved Veterans.

OBJECTIVE 3: Enhance targeted services to address the needs of vulnerable and underserved populations.

Strategies to achieve the objective:

- 3.1** Optimize and increase coordinated outreach and service delivery focused on identifying and engaging homeless Veterans in unsheltered settings.
- 3.2** Provide immediate access to interim housing and supportive services by eliminating unnecessary barriers and imposed preconditions for immediate access to permanent housing.
 - 3.2 A** Enhance residential homeless programs to increase access and decrease barriers for all Veterans and their families.
 - 3.2 B** Eliminate administrative and regulatory burdens and lower barriers to immediate access to housing.
- 3.3** Facilitate the full integration of VA resources into the local coordinated entry system to provide an agile homeless response in collaboration with community stakeholders.
- 3.4** Support effective housing and supportive services prioritization through community by-name lists and data sharing.
- 3.5** Conduct targeted local housing surge events to facilitate immediate enrollment into homeless programs, streamline access to interim housing, and accelerate permanent housing placements for Veterans.
- 3.6** Increase access to housing programs and services for Native Veterans through enhanced engagement and technical assistance.
- 3.7** Increase coordination and integration to develop approaches to address the service and housing needs of aging Veterans, those at risk of suicide, and Veterans with substance use disorder and behavioral health needs.

OBJECTIVE 4: Use research and data to make informed and timely decisions.

Strategies to achieve the objective:

- 4.1** Develop, modernize, and sustain tools that provide the necessary insights to make data-driven decisions that positively impact Veterans' outcomes and improve program performance.
- 4.2** Incorporate research and data insights into homeless program operations by providing training, education, and tools to homeless program staff so they can effectively utilize data internally and with community partners.
- 4.3** Promote research and evaluations that provide comprehensive understandings of homeless programs and the Veterans served and enable the identification and rapid implementation of evidence-based strategies to end Veteran homelessness.

OBJECTIVE 5: Provide national technical assistance for strategic actions.

Strategies to achieve the objective:

- 5.1** Provide remote and on-site technical assistance and training to VA medical center homeless programs and grantees.
 - 5.1 A** Provide training, technical assistance, and resources that encourage promising practices related to effective outreach, preventing and resolving returns to homelessness, and accelerating permanent housing placements.
- 5.2** Coordinate and provide technical assistance to interagency partners to support ending Veteran homelessness.

OBJECTIVE 6: Ensure adequate homeless programs resources and support the development of a highly skilled workforce.

Strategies to achieve the objective:

- 6.1** Implement a national strategy that applies innovative approaches to accelerate adequate nationwide staffing and resources toward serving homeless or at risk of homeless Veterans.
- 6.2** Provide and prioritize education and technical training in alignment with strategies and efforts that address evolving needs and local service delivery demands.
- 6.3** Develop strategies that support the appropriate staffing resources to conduct street outreach and provide case management to meet the needs of the homeless Veteran population.

The background of the image is a close-up, slightly blurred view of the American flag. The blue field with white stars is prominent in the upper half, while the red and white stripes are visible in the lower half. The text is centered in the blue field.

**Providing mission-driven
customer service to support
America's Veterans.**