

Understanding Veteran Homelessness



Veteran homelessness is not a choice. Learn about the overlapping factors that can contribute to Veteran homelessness and how you can help lead people to life-saving resources.



Myth vs. Reality

Did you know?

The idea that “homelessness is a choice” is one of the most common and harmful misconceptions that can prevent homeless Veterans from connecting with resources that can help them out of homelessness.

Reality:

No one chooses the pain, instability, and trauma that comes with losing the fundamental human right to shelter. Homelessness among Veterans is most often the result of overlapping personal, social, and systemic factors.



Understanding the Complexity of Veteran Homelessness

Did you know?

Veteran homelessness rarely stems from one single cause. Instead, it is the result of many overlapping factors from personal and social, to systemic.



Key contributing factors include:

- Untreated mental health conditions such as PTSD
- Substance use disorders
- History of incarceration
- Limited affordable housing
- Uneven economic opportunity
- Breakdown of social support networks

When these factors intersect, even Veterans who never imagined being without a home can find themselves at risk.



Living in Crisis

Did you know?

Survival behaviors among Veterans are often misunderstood, and stigma makes trust harder to build.



Repeated rejection and stigma wear down trust over time



Veterans may appear guarded, skeptical, or defensive when help is offered



These reactions are rooted in self-preservation, not manipulation



Disappointment and broken systems are part of their daily reality

Veterans' behavior shaped by survival is not a moral failure—it's a response to crisis and chronic instability.



Breaking the Stigma

Did you know?

Expectations of gratitude or compliance can unintentionally reinforce harm.

Homelessness is a state of crisis, not a reflection of a Veteran's worth. They deserve dignity, understanding, and care without conditions.

There is no such thing as a "broken Veteran." Reintegration after service requires support, not judgment.



How You Can Help

Did you know?

You play a role in ending Veteran homelessness.



By taking these actions, you can help stop the stigma around Veteran homelessness and help get homeless Veterans to the resources they need to stabilize:

- Untreated mental health conditions such as PTSD
- Substance use disorders
- History of incarceration
- Limited affordable housing
- Uneven economic opportunity
- Breakdown of social support networks

When these factors intersect, even Veterans who never imagined being without a home can find themselves at risk.

Learn more about VA homeless programs

- Call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at **877-424-3838**.
- Learn more about housing initiatives and other programs for Veterans exiting homelessness, including how to help house Veterans in your community, by visiting the VA Homeless Programs website at <https://department.va.gov/homeless>.



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