



Ending Veteran Homelessness Highlights:

What to Do When Numbers Go Up?

This resource was developed through community efforts across the country to end homelessness among Veterans and reflects practices that local communities have successfully implemented toward achieving that goal. It is focused on strategies for Community Veteran Leadership committees to implement locally.

If the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in your community has increased, in spite of your collective efforts, the following suggestions may help.

Data Strategies

Analyze data from HMIS and other available sources to examine the characteristics of Veterans that are entering the homeless response system, such as last known residence, household status, disabilities, age, etc. Are there any commonalities about those who are entering the system that can be used to inform future planning?

- Does it seem like people are being evicted in higher numbers? Look at **prevention services** and seek out assistance from SSVF, [Legal Aid](#) or [Veteran Treatment Courts](#).
- Are people being discharged into homelessness from other systems of care, such as Veterans Administration (VA) Domiciliary and Long Term Residential Programs, hospital discharges, criminal justice, or healthcare? Meet with these partners to discuss **discharge planning**. [Veteran Justice Outreach](#) (VJO) specialists provide direct outreach, assessment, and case management for justice-involved Veterans in local courts and jails and liaison with local justice system partners. Review inflows and referral patterns into VA Grant Per Diem (GPD) and VA Contract Residential Programs. Collaborate closely with VA Health Care for Homeless Veterans staff to **prioritize literally homeless Veterans** into these programs. Collaborate with VA staff to prioritize community-based housing or reunification at discharge with referral to the VA Homeless Residential Programs as a last resort.

Graph or chart 6-12 months of **inflow data** of Veterans experiencing homelessness from HMIS and your Active List. Do there seem to be any trends that can be noted? Many communities see yearly increases of people coming into the system in spring and summer, with fewer in the fall and winter.

Take time to **review your community Active List** and other available community level data. Pay special attention to Veterans who are chronically homeless, long-term homeless, Veterans who have been on the Active List the longest, those that have refused engagement or housing offers. Through your case conferencing efforts, dedicate a few weeks to focus on this group and get them housed.

- Think about **organizing an outreach surge** with partners in your community to re-energize the effort. (Also known as a: community registry week, stand-down, community connect or reveille). Publicize the details, work with community partners to assemble teams, canvass the area and identify Veterans who may be reluctant to seek help or shelter, or those in missions that may not be connected to HMIS or CES. Is there a local base or guard reserve in your area that can be tapped to assist? Local law enforcement departments are also partners that can be helpful to join the effort.

- What does your active list information reveal regarding **unmet needs**? Are there a few categories of Veterans that have been challenging to serve, due to specific needs such as barrier free units, multiple bedrooms for large families, or challenges due to sex offender status? Use this information for **specific planning and landlord outreach** for housing that meets these needs.

Take the opportunity to **map out your homeless response system** including prevention, coordinated entry, outreach, diversion, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing. Do you see any gaps? On the map, be sure to include the average length of time in days it takes a Veteran to access each type of intervention. Are there steps that can be completed concurrently or paperwork that can be eliminated or shortened to accelerate the time from engagement to housing? Use mapping results to document and develop key system processes.

Strategizing with Partners

Either in concert with or separate from the mapping exercise, convene a **meeting of outreach staff** (SSVF, VA, PATH, others). Discuss what they are seeing on the ground. Explore reasons for the increase and suggestions for ways to mitigate the tide of inflow.

Convene a focus group of **formerly homeless Veterans** to gather information on their experiences. What could have been done to prevent them from becoming homeless? What would have been helpful to get housed more quickly? What suggestions do they have for system improvements?

Check in with your **neighboring CoCs** to see if they are being affected by an increase in numbers. Add a question to your coordinated entry assessment and Active List to capture data on where Veterans experiencing homelessness are coming from to keep data on migration.

Set up a **creative problem solving session with your community partners**.

- Have fresh data to review and ask partners to bring data with them.
- Provide lots of caffeinated beverages and snacks, as well as markers and flipcharts to write and draw on.
- Think creatively and out of the box! What practices can be changed to be more effective?
- What do you need to start doing, do differently or stop doing? What should you do more of or less of?
- What changes can be made tomorrow or next Tuesday that will have impact?

Disclaimer: This tool provides examples from communities without any edits from HUD. They are included only as useful examples or templates. HUD has not reviewed them to determine if they meet all funding requirements, including whether all costs depicted are eligible. HUD is not endorsing the examples as strategies that all communities should adopt. These are not official HUD documents.