



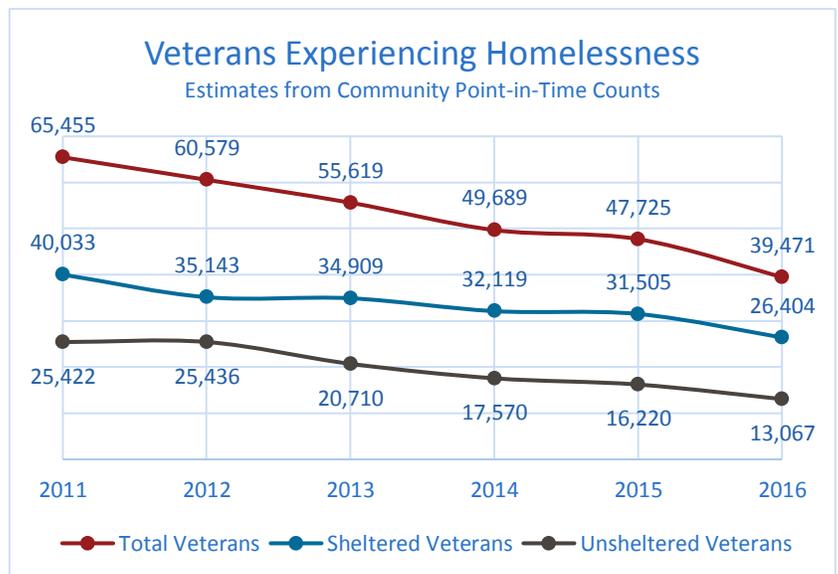
Ending Veteran Homelessness: Our Progress, Essential Strategies, and the Work Ahead

Our Progress

We know how to end homelessness among Veterans. Since 2014, more than 800 mayors, governors, and other state and local officials have answered the call of First Lady Michelle Obama’s Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, pledging to do all they can to ensure their communities succeed. And it’s working.

A [growing list](#) of more than 30 communities, and the entire states of Connecticut, Delaware, and Virginia, have proven that ending Veteran homelessness is possible and sustainable. As documented through the federal [Criteria and Benchmarks](#), they have proven that we can drive down the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness to as close to zero as possible, while also building and sustaining systems that can effectively and efficiently address Veterans’ housing crises in the future.

The national data tell the same story of remarkable progress. Thanks to unwavering commitment and partnership at the federal, state, and local levels, we’ve [reduced Veteran homelessness by 47%](#) in this country between 2010 and 2016—including a remarkable 17% reduction during 2015 alone—and achieved a 56% reduction in Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness.



Essential Strategies

Our progress has been driven by urgent action at all levels of government and across all sectors. Federal agencies have engaged in unprecedented coordination and shared responsibility. The administration and Congress have expanded investments into federal programs, such as the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, which provide a range of housing and services interventions. State and local entities, and philanthropy, have aligned investments with the federal resources. Communities have formed stronger partnerships to deploy those resources through best practices, including coordinated entry and Housing First approaches. And governors, mayors, and other public officials have mobilized their communities in support of a clear and ambitious goal.

We have identified 10 essential strategies communities are using to drive progress and to make sure that Veteran homelessness—when it can’t be prevented entirely—is a rare, brief, and one-time experience. We encourage stakeholders in every community to [review these strategies](#) and identify opportunities to strengthen their efforts and systems for ending Veteran homelessness—and for ending all homelessness:

1. Start at the Top: Get State and Local Leaders to Publicly Commit to and Coordinate Efforts
2. Implement a Housing First System Orientation and Response

3. Implement a Coordinated Entry System
4. Set and Meet Ambitious Short and Long-Term Goals by Deploying All Resources Effectively
5. Improve Transitional Housing Performance and Consider Adopting Different Models
6. Engage and Support Private Landlords as Partners
7. Identify and Be Accountable to all Veterans Experiencing Homelessness
8. Conduct Coordinated Outreach and Engagement Efforts
9. Increase Connections to Employment
10. Coordinate with Legal Services Organizations to Solve Legal Needs

The Work Ahead

But we know our work is not complete. In their 2016 Point-in-Time counts, communities estimated that more than 39,000 Veterans were still experiencing homelessness, and about one-third of those Veterans were unsheltered, living on our streets. To achieve our goal to end Veteran homelessness once and for all, we must focus even more effort on several important priorities:

- **Increasing the supply of affordable housing.** While we must continue to target and prioritize existing affordable housing to Veterans exiting homelessness, we must also take steps to increase the overall supply of units affordable to such Veterans. Jurisdictions need to remove local barriers to housing development that have reduced the ability of many housing markets to respond to growing demand. And we must invest in new affordable housing across all levels of government.
- **Strengthening and transforming the roles of transitional housing programs.** We need transitional housing programs to play a variety of important roles within our communities, including some that provide more intensive, recovery-oriented services. But we also need more programs to embrace housing first practices, to lower barriers to entry and residency, and to provide more bridge housing opportunities as Veterans access permanent housing destinations. These changes must be supported through guidance and technical assistance, but also incentivized through federal funding processes. Ultimately, as communities progress toward achieving the goal, it is likely that many will need fewer transitional housing beds.
- **Enhancing connections to employment services and opportunities.** To both prevent homelessness, and to ensure the success and stability of Veterans who have exited homelessness, we must do more to integrate employment services and opportunities into our housing and services systems.
- **Ensuring all Veterans, including Veterans who are currently ineligible for VA programs, have access to opportunities.** We must continue to innovate, and to identify public and private funding sources, to support permanent housing outcomes for Veterans who are not eligible for VA services and programs. At the same time, Congress must act on pending legislation to allow additional Veterans with other-than-honorable discharges to access VA assistance when appropriate. And we must continue to provide more resources to tribal and rural communities, so that Veterans have access to housing and services interventions regardless of where they live.
- **Maintaining partnerships at all levels of government.** To sustain the progress we've made to date, we must continue to pursue a collaborative approach across federal, state and local government, with federal assistance carefully targeted to ensure that it is complementary to and supportive of on-the-ground efforts by state and local officials to address community-specific challenges.
- **Building lasting systems that will sustain our success.** Finally, we must sustain our investments into the strategies and programs that are working, knowing that our communities must have lasting systems that are poised to respond to crisis every day.

Together, we can drive our progress even further. We can end Veteran homelessness.