

HOMELESS VETERANS >

# WHAT DOES THE END OF VETERAN HOMELESSNESS LOOK LIKE AND HOW ARE CITIES GETTING THERE?

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In 2010, the Opening Doors plan to end homelessness was presented to Congress and the Administration. In it, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) set the bold goal of ending veteran homelessness by 2015. Since

then, there has been a 33% reduction in veteran homelessness across the country. In the last year, Phoenix and Salt Lake City have become the first two cities in the nation to announce they have ended chronic veteran homelessness by reaching “functional zero” for this sub-population.

This progress has been made because of an unprecedented level of resources that have been made available by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)

and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In addition, leaders from cities, states, non-profits, philanthropies, faith communities, educational institutions and the business community have come together to forge new collaborations. These efforts have increased

the coordination of services and resources available to ensure all veterans have a place to call home.

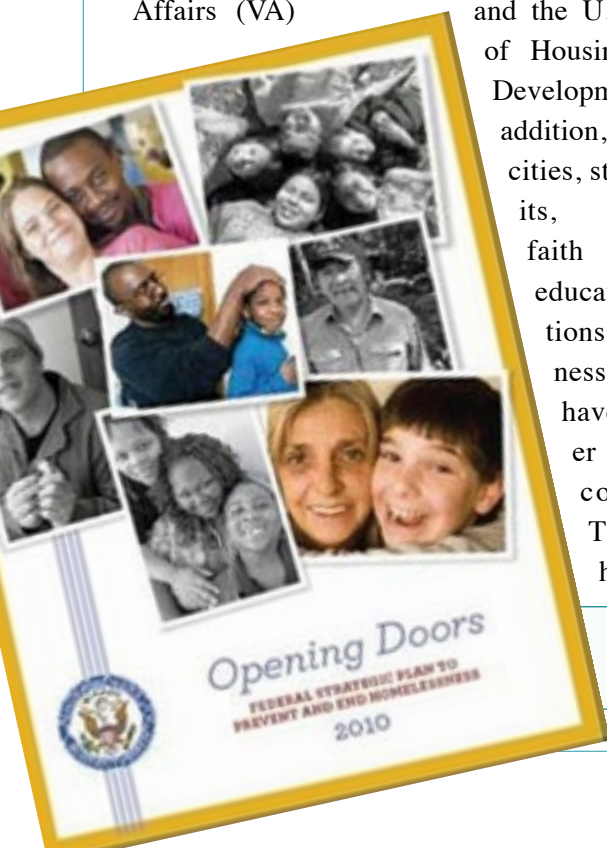
To help build upon existing collaborations in major metropolitan areas, the VA launched the 25 Cities Initiative earlier this year. A major goal of the initiative is to help

communities build coordinated assessment and housing placement (CAHP) systems. These systems bring together information gathered as community stakeholders assess the needs of people experiencing homelessness and prioritize people for placement into housing.



In addition to prioritizing people for placement, community CAHP systems are working to identify, catalogue and continuously monitor the availability of housing supports that are available in the community. In addition to monitoring the availability of HUD-VASH vouchers, communities are working to include information about other permanent supportive housing programs, transitional housing and other forms of affordable housing, both subsidized and non-subsidized.

To help raise the commitment of local leaders to the goal of ending veteran homelessness, First Lady Michelle Obama recently launched the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness. To date, more than 225 city, county and state officials have joined the challenge and committed to ending veteran homelessness in 2015.



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Understanding what the end of veteran homelessness looks like is a critical first step. Nationally, the VA has defined “functional zero” as counting no more than 12,500 veterans in emergency shelter and transitional housing during the 2016 point-in-time count. To quantify the issue at a local level, all VA medical centers have been working to develop gap analyses for the areas they cover. In Florida, the VA’s Gap Analysis model estimates that 19,241 veterans will experience homelessness from 2013 to 2015.

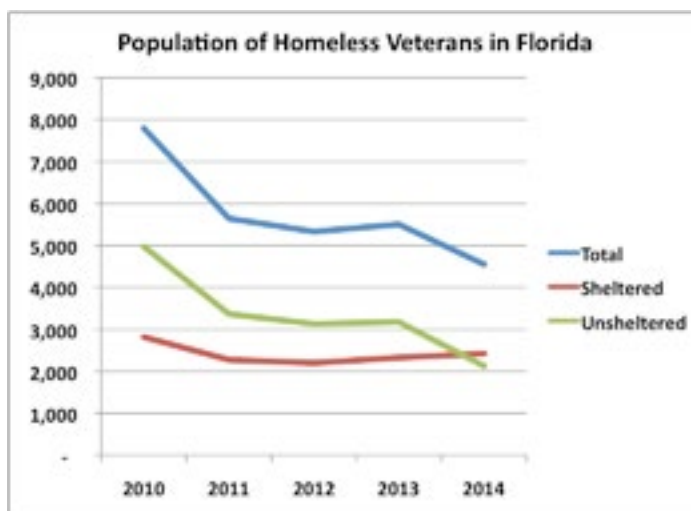
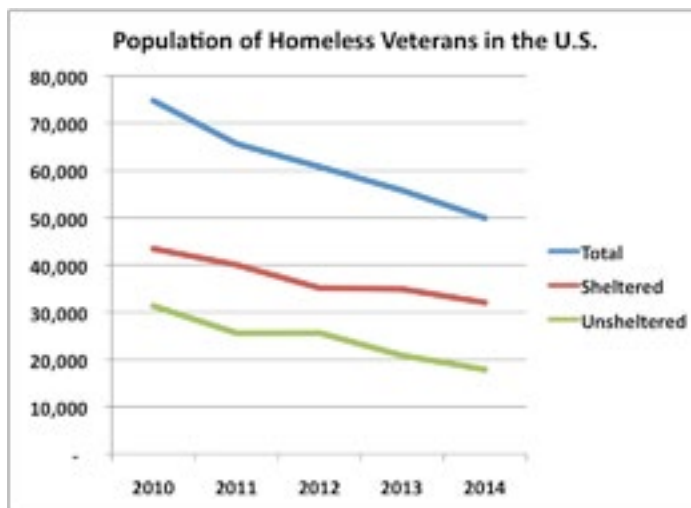
For decades, advocates have correctly noted that the lack of resources allowed no real opportunity for a substantive decline in homelessness. However, the decline in Veteran homelessness gives evidence to what providers and advocates have long claimed. Homelessness as we know it can end.

As more communities focus on ending veteran homelessness, the changes in client prioritization, service coordination, and housing placement can be extended

to other segments of the homeless population. As communities succeed in ending veteran homelessness, local leaders will have the necessary evidence to show Congress and others that ending homelessness for other subpopulations is also possible.

For the first time in a generation, there exists public and political will to address the homelessness of at least the veteran segment of the overall population. In addition, there are the necessary resources to meet the needs of homeless veterans and those resources span the housing spectrum, from vouchers, to transitional housing to soft-subsides for prevention and rapid-rehousing. If communities can make the necessary system changes to join with public will and increased federal resources to end homelessness for our veterans, we will have seized this once-in-

a-lifetime opportunity to demonstrate that we can end homelessness for anyone.



Data from HUD’s 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress: Part 1

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