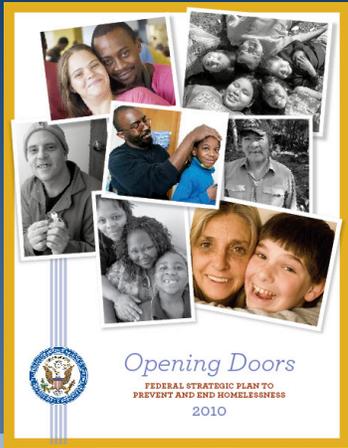




MAYORS CHALLENGE TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

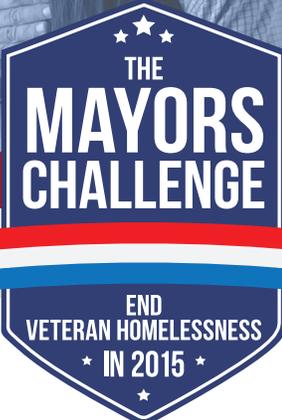
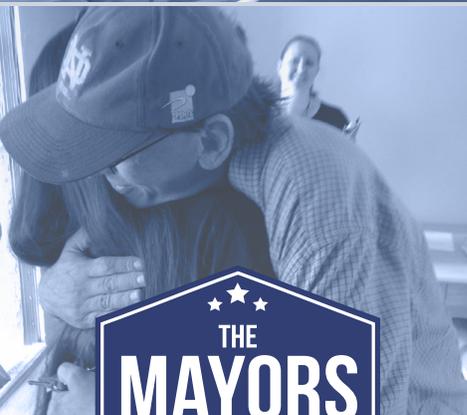


Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness set a bold and audacious goal to end Veteran homelessness in the United States before the end of 2015. Over the last four years, the Obama Administration and our partners in states and communities across the country have achieved a 33 percent decrease in homelessness among Veterans. On June 4, 2014, as part of the *Joining Forces* initiative, First Lady Michelle Obama announced that a growing coalition of mayors, governors, and local officials are committed to ending Veteran homelessness in their communities by the end of 2015, and called on additional mayors and local leaders to join this effort. Today, hundreds of leaders have joined the challenge, and several communities, such as Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Houston, and others are already on track to meet or beat this goal. On January 7, 2015, New Orleans announced it had effectively ended Veteran homelessness, becoming the first major U.S. city to achieve the goal.

Through the **Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness**, local leaders across the country will marshal federal, local, and nonprofit efforts to end Veteran homelessness in their states and communities. Ending Veteran homelessness means reaching the point where there are no Veterans sleeping on our streets and every Veteran has access to permanent housing. Should Veterans become homeless or be at risk of becoming homeless, communities will have the capacity to quickly connect them to the help they need to achieve housing stability. When those things are accomplished, our nation will achieve its goal.

To aid mayors and communities in pursuit of the goal of ending homelessness among Veterans, the federal government has provided targeted resources and implemented strategies to strengthen our country's homelessness assistance programs. At the local level, mayors and their community partners can achieve the goal of ending Veteran homelessness through:

- ★ Using a **Housing First** approach, which removes barriers to help Veterans obtain permanent housing as quickly as possible, without unnecessary prerequisites;
- ★ Prioritizing the most vulnerable Veterans, especially those experiencing chronic homelessness, for **permanent supportive housing** opportunities, including those created through the HUD-VASH program;
- ★ Coordinating outreach efforts to identify and engage every Veteran experiencing homelessness and focusing outreach efforts on achieving housing outcomes;
- ★ Targeting **rapid re-housing** interventions, including those made possible through the Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Services for Veteran Families program, toward Veterans and their families who need shorter-term rental subsidies and services in order to be reintegrated back into our communities;
- ★ Leveraging housing and services that can help Veterans who are ineligible for some of the VA's programs get into stable housing;
- ★ Increasing early detection and access to preventive services so at-risk Veterans and their families remain stably housed; and
- ★ Closely monitoring progress toward the goal, including the success of programs in achieving permanent housing outcomes.



To publicly commit to ending Veteran homelessness in your community and learn more about joining the Mayors Challenge, send an email to mayorschallenge@hud.gov and visit <http://bit.ly/mayorschallenge>.

CRITERIA FOR ACHIEVING THE GOAL OF ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS BY MAYORS CHALLENGE COMMUNITIES

1. The community took steps needed to **identify all Veterans** experiencing homelessness, including Veterans who were unsheltered, as well as Veterans in shelter, in Grant Per Diem programs and other VA residential programs, in other transitional housing programs, and in other temporary institutional settings. This identification of Veterans included **both Veterans that meet the definition of chronic homelessness and Veterans that are experiencing homelessness but do not meet the definition of chronic homelessness**. The definition of Veteran used includes all persons who served in the armed forces, regardless of how long they served or the type of discharge they received.
2. There are **no longer any Veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the community**. Some Veterans may not yet be in permanent housing, but all are now in some form of shelter (emergency shelter, treatment programs, transitional programs, other temporary institutional settings, etc...)
3. The community has the resources and a plan and timeline for providing **permanent housing opportunities to all Veterans** who are currently sheltered but are still experiencing homelessness. The community has identified the programs and resources that will be used to provide those housing opportunities and can provide those housing opportunities quickly and without barriers to entry, **using Housing First principles** and practices.
4. The community has resources, plans, and systems in place for identifying (1) Veterans that may have been missed in initial efforts to identify Veterans, (2) at-risk Veterans and (3) Veterans newly experiencing homelessness in the future.
 - a. The community has adequate **outreach and engagement strategies** in place to be confident that they can identify such Veterans.
 - b. The community has an adequate level of resources and the capacity to provide appropriate services to **prevent homelessness for at-risk Veterans** in the future.
 - c. The community can provide options for shelter and has identified the programs and resources that will be used to provide **quick access to permanent housing** opportunities for these Veterans not addressed in the initial work.
5. The community has an adequate level of resources and appropriate plans and services in place to **ensure the housing stability of formerly-homeless Veterans currently in permanent housing** or who enter permanent housing in the future.



DEFINING HOMELESSNESS AND CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness

While eligibility for specific programs may vary, the definition of homelessness used for the Mayors Challenge is from the "Final Rule on the Definition of Homeless" published by HUD in the *Federal Register* on December 5, 2011. While the HUD regulations maintain four categories for defining people who are homeless and eligible for certain homeless assistance programs, communities participating in the Mayors Challenge are encouraged to focus on identifying Veterans who meet the definition contained in Category 1 of the homeless definition; those persons that are literally homeless and lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

1. An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
2. An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); or
3. An individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.

Chronic Homelessness

It is critically important that communities participating in the Mayors Challenge ensure that their outreach and engagement efforts are reaching Veterans who are experiencing chronic homelessness. The definition of "chronically homeless" that should be used for the Mayors Challenge is contained within the Continuum of Care Program Interim Rule at 24 CFR 578.3, which states that a chronically homeless person is:

1. An individual who:
 - a. Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and
 - b. Has been homeless and living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least one year or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years; and
 - c. Can be diagnosed with one or more of the following conditions: substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability (as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002)), post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability;
2. An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition [as described in Section I.D.2.(a) of this Notice], before entering that facility; or
3. A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition [as described in Section I.D.2.(a) of this Notice], including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

Additional information for understanding these definitions can be found in HUD's [Resources Available for the New Homeless Definition](http://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessResources_6.5.12.pdf) (www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessResources_6.5.12.pdf)